

# Friends of Burma, Inc. Newsletter

## Friends of Burma Annual Report 2019



[January 19, 2020](#)

**Overview.** Looking back over the last year I am pleased with everything we accomplished. While we are a small organization, we have a very dedicated board which works hard and gives generously. We are supported by a core of donors who faithfully support the work in Burma, many of them for many years. Last year \$496,486 was entrusted to us which we passed on to our programs in Burma (Myanmar). Our three largest programs are 1. Orphan support, 2. Sowards Memorial Scholarships and 3. Medical support. About \$200,000 of that income was from partner organizations which we passed on to their programs which ranged from Leprosy Hospital, Bible Schools, Deaf School, medical care in the Chin state and graduates of Child Care Centers. So between our programs and their programs, we had a profound effect on the lives of a good number of persons in Burma.

We support 119 children in Child Care Centers with \$43,057. Childcare is a more accurate term since many are not orphans, but desperately poor children in need.

The Sowards Scholarships Program was given out by Myanmar Baptist Convention, a project of Neil & Diana Sowards—no general funds from our donors were used for this program. The leadership committee awarded 401 scholarships to children of ministers and Christian workers and 63 to financially needy students for a total of 464 recipients.

Medical support goes to the KBC Hospital in Insein and the Matthew 25 Love Hospital in Pathein. Also some support goes to free clinics.

FOB supplies \$20,000 to Friends of Myanmar Governing Board which they use for programs that they feel are important. It is forbidden to use “Burma” in Myanmar.

**Diana's Commitment.** Diana wants to share this, "At the last board meeting in July, I made a commitment to reach out to people more assertively than I had in the past to tell them about FOB and ask them to donate. To my surprise, some of them did! If you tell about our work, this will be interesting to people. We are also trying to put more on our Facebook, Neil-Diana Sowards. People have been reading this and donating. So we want to ask you, our donors and mailing list recipients, to do likewise this year. Reach out to your friends and inform them about why you think FOB is an excellent charity to support. Many people want to be part of something big and there is nothing bigger or more important than building the Kingdom of God. We thank you in advance." You might want to say on your social media site that you find your giving to FOB a very rewarding experience and list our website.

**Microcredit Program** or Self Help Women Group. FOB gives grants to Naw Paw Gaw of Women Empowerment Program. She sent us reports on eleven groups she organized this year. One group, called Blessed Women Group was made up of eleven members who had survived being sex trafficked and two that has suffered sexual abuse. They made sewing products while receiving health care and counseling. Their leader, a woman minister, also encouraged spiritual and character development.

**Alternative Christmas Giving.** This year more people felt that giving \$50 to a needy person in Burma or \$75 to a team of students from Kawthulei Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBSC) on the border was a good way to celebrate Christmas. Twenty three donations were given to the poor and fourteen to the student teams that made field trips to villages with the Christmas story. Below is a report on a \$50 donation.



Last year she became weaker and weaker and at last she couldn't eat at all. Her son took her to a clinic. After an injection slowly and slowly she can eat little by little. But because of that injection she can not walk well now. She has to use stick to walk. But she thank the doctor for an injection which saved her life. Now she regain her appetite.

She received 26000 kyat from a donor. I told her that not to give it to her children but to buy what she wants to eat. She smile and say "yes" and blessed the donor.

Sincerely Russ

The Alternative Christmas Giving Reports from Burma and the border are available on our website [friendsofburma.org](http://friendsofburma.org)

Yangon Half Marathon. One of FOB's board members, Cynthia Wu, ran in the half marathon and raised \$28,000 for an upgrade in the building at Matthew 25 Love Hospital at Pathein and her program, Lightning for Learning, that is helping orphans who qualified for college to get their education.



The Mission Evangelistic Team with their creative stage in a village.

**From:** Mary Wood

**Subject:** Report #1 team from Mission Campaign to Karen State



Students trimming nails and toe nails.

I want to begin this report by saying that as students of KKBBSC provided this first report of mission campaign to me all I did was cry. Their mission campaign during the month of December is humbling to me. The amount of care and compassion that they provided to 13 villages amazes me beyond belief. During their travels, they managed to travel by truck, foot, boat and tractor. What 75 dollars can do in one month for a group of traveling students to Karen State in Myanmar only God can fathom.

The First group reported traveling to Brigade Seven Area visiting 13 villages. They

did not meet any Christians. All villagers were Buddhist and Animists. Some village leaders allowed the group to share the good news of Jesus Christ but some did not allow. The villagers were poor and unable to afford to send their children to study at school. Another village consisted mostly of grandmothers and grandfathers. Their children did not care for them. Out of great pity the students cared for the elderly ones in their loneliness.

The students took pity on the children and villagers as they provided dramas, music, singing and love.

If you ever wondered how you can do ministry from your life in USA, consider giving 75 dollars to a mission campaign group this Christmas during sweet December. Your money will send students to do the work you want to do but you will not ever be able to do for yourself. The students will do, in their capacity, the work of God in your place. Their love is packed full of determination and commitment to do the will of God with a Smile and a greeting. These students go into places in Burma where you may be able to go, but the students will go often at great risks to themselves and their health, and they go with deep ability to love others as Jesus commanded us to do as Christians.

Tablut (thank you) for your constant faith in the Karen people. Thank you for your generous giving. Thank you for supporting ministry inside the jungle in very remote places that still waits to receive the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your giving to the Mission Campaign of KKBBSC.

With Love and Admiration from KKBBSC,

Thramu Doh Mary Wood. She is a person that uses her own money to go to KKBBSC and teach and help in various ways.



An interested audience at a village

**The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBSC)** is located in Zone C of Mae La Refugee Camp which has 40,000 persons. It is on the Thai side of the border with Burma. The Bible School students receive a bachelor of theology degree upon completion of their matriculation. There are two tracks in the school; one in English language, another in Karen. There are approximately 480 students currently enrolled. They come from other refugee camps along the border, areas within the Karen State of Burma, or inside Thailand. Not all students are Karen. Some students are Karenni, or Thai.

In 2008 a relocation process began in which 12,000 people relocated to a third country, one of which was the United States. Rev. Mary Wood, an American minister from Toledo, Ohio, travels back and forth to teach at the Bible school since 2004. She is now enrolled in the doctoral program at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee Kansas, with two other teachers from KKBBSC. Their cohort totals 10 students. Five are from Burma and five are from the United States. They are hoping to use their Doctorate degrees to teach students Master of Divinity students, a new degree program offered through KKBBSC.



Three typical students from KKBBSC

The school is currently receiving many students who are transferring from other schools in the Bible school due to camp rations have been reduced. Many other students have no means to pay tuition fees. Still others come from other refugee camps. There is a large need for scholarships. We have one young woman who would be enabled to be a student at KKBBSC for 300 dollars per year which covers matriculation fees. It needs to be a five year commitment. What a blessing to help those who are learning to be Christian church leaders in remote places. Please consider an ongoing commitment to sponsor a student from the Bible school. Your gift will be one that gives back to others a hundredfold.

**Eyeglasses.** One of our most appreciated small programs is our prescription eye glasses for Seminary and Bible School students. After we give a grant to a school, an optometrist comes to the school and tests the students and finds out what strength of eye glasses they need. He then has the glasses made up in Yangon and returns to adjust the glasses for each student. As one student said, "I am so thankful because I can now read as long as I want without my eyes watering and hurting."

#### **Wish List.**

- Provide a medicated mosquito net which is the best prevention against malaria \$7.
- Eyeglasses for Seminary and Bible School students. Prescription eyeglass \$17.

- Sponsor a self help or microcredit group \$300.
- Supporting an orphan \$360.
- Support a free clinic for a month \$1,200.
- Support a refugee student at KKBBS school (5 year commitment) \$300 per year.
- The Karen Baptist Theological Institute wants to expand their music program to offer a BCM (Bachelor of Christian Music). They have three graduates from their current music program who want additional education. The cost is \$5,000 per year for education in the Philippines.

### **Why I support Friends of Burma.**

I support Friends of Burma because it puts dollars where needs are great. Friends of Burma supports Christian education, health care, orphanages, and women's programs, and missions work in Burma - all programs that I believe are important for spreading the Gospel of Christ in a Buddhist country. Nearly all funds given go to the actual programs, with only a small overhead, unlike most other non-profit organizations. FOB supports many programs that benefit a large number of people in Burma, both Christians and non-Christians, and this is important in an impoverished country that is hungry not only for assistance but also for the message of Christ. Phil Schock.

Phil Schock, son of Harold and Estelle Schock, missionaries to Burma and later Hong Kong. Phil was a child in Burma and speaks some Burmese. He has served on the board of FOB for over fifteen years. He has visited Burma four times as an adult. He recently married Samara Sanchez who is the daughter of missionaries to the Congo and now Rwanda.



The modern equivalence of washing their feet.

We hope you might want to consider FOB in your will so that the work you have been supporting will continue. Neil and Diana's children know that the bulk of their estate will go to Friends of Burma so it can continue their work with the Burmese.



All the work of FOB is done by volunteers in the U. S. FOB has one paid staff member in Myanmar. Less than 2% of our income goes for overhead—most of which is for our one staff member in Myanmar and printing and distribution of our 3 annual newsletters.

U. S. office is at the Sowards' residence at 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807, E-mail: [neildianasowards@juno.com](mailto:neildianasowards@juno.com) 260 745-3658, Website: [friendsofburma.org](http://friendsofburma.org) All donations are tax deductible because Friends of Burma, Inc. is a 501(C)(3) organization.



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