

Friends of Burma, Inc. Newsletter

Friends of Burma Annual Report 2020



January 15, 2021

It has been a hard year with the virus both here and in Burma. Many of our donors have been amazing, increasing their support to really help in this difficult time.

We had our Annual Meeting of Friends of Burma (FOB) in Peoria, AZ in October with six attending in person and twelve by Zoom. So we got reports from Burma and we got to meet our new Financial Secretary, Dr. Fom Men, by Zoom. After eight years of service Russ Kadoe resigned for health reasons and we were very fortunate in finding Dr. Fom Men whose husband teaches at MIT. Russ really helped her understand the job and she took the reins with a minimum of problems.

Thanks to so many donors saying, "use where most needed," we were able to help KBC Hospital and Matthew 25 Love Hospital with money so they could take the very necessary steps to deal with the virus.

We have sixteen board members who deserve our applause for their activism and commitment to the goals of FOB. John Peterson continued to spread the word among his friends, Show Ei Tun gave us valuable feedback from Myanmar (Burma). Adam Maung ably presided over our annual meeting. Lwin Moe, in Canada, gave valuable aid with various computer problems. Saw Htaw Plaw Htoo took on the treasurer's job and filing the 990 tax form for FOB. The instructions for that form are 78 pages long! After 36 years FOB is still a volunteer organization in the U. S. Our overhead is still less than 1.1%.

Saw Htaw's Report on FOB finances.

Friends of Burma, Inc. received from donors, endowment, grants, and all sources for FOB programs a total of \$266,617.22. In this amount there was \$59,432 designated for orphanages; \$55,435 for Christian education for Institutions; Special ministry projects \$25,036; Health care \$12,430; Christian Education Scholarships \$10,640; Humanitarian Relief \$7,060; Ministry Organizational Support \$5,000; Ministry Support for Specific Individuals \$3,950; Loan Repayment \$774.13; and Scholarship Aid in U. S. \$300. An additional \$86,560 was received from undesignated donations, endowment, grants, etc. The annual budget for FOB programs was \$65,170, which came from that \$86,560 undesignated money. Expenses in Myanmar were \$4,300, mostly salary for our financial secretary. Expenses in the U.S. were

\$1,351, mostly for postage and printing of our three newsletters. So our total overhead was \$5,651.

FOB also received \$289,762.50 on behalf of our partnership ministries which was passed on to those organizations' programs in Burma. They were charged 1% for administering their funds.

Therefore in 2020 FOB handled a total of \$556,379.72 for programs for the people of Burma. Overhead was \$5,651 or 1.01 % of income.

Aspects of FOB's Programs. It constantly amazes me how God is able to use us. A donor sent us a donation with the notation that it be used for nurse's training. There was no such request on our Wish List. We had no one waiting for such help. But within a week we learned that a graduate of one of our orphanages wanted to take nurses training. So God provided even before we knew the need.

We had 35 donations of \$50 each to be given to a poor person in Burma. Here is one of the reports.

"I am a minister serving in a Bible School and I usually visit villages on the weekend to see the real situation in the community. During the Christmas season this year, I got a chance to go for a leprosy mission, which is in Mayan Chaung village.

After meeting U Tun Tin and listening to his life history, I was impressed and had compassion on him. U Tun Tin was from Thaug Gyi village, Kyone Pyaw district, Ayeyawady division. He was rejected by the community because of leprosy disease and had to live in a grave. After that, he was discovered by the Christian leprosy community in Mayan Chaung. At that time, he had already lost some fingers and one eye. After arriving Mayan Chaung, one leg was also amputated below the knee. In 2003, for the first time, a prosthesis was made at Mawlamyine Southern Leprosy Hospital. However, the prosthesis was damaged and is now in need of a new prosthesis. Walking on crutches is not comfortable for 65-year-old U Tun Tin.



U Tun Tin is a poor leprosy victim. However, he tries hard for his survival without giving up. Therefore, I chose him to share 50 USD as a Christmas present.

After receiving the Christmas present wonderfully and happily, U Tun Tin says "Praise the Lord for the Christmas present! Now I have the opportunity to walk. Thank you, Jesus, and also thank you the giver."

Best regards, Shwe Gyan"

The persons who act as our agents and give out the \$50 are very glad to do it.

Partners in Christ.

God has laid some projects on the hearts of some persons here. If what they want to do to help the people in Burma lines up with FOB's mission statement, then FOB partners with them. We can give their donors tax deduction which saves them on their income taxes. We can get the money into Burma at a cost of 1%--far less than the banks. And we can get their donations into the hands of their contacts there.

One man's father had leprosy and was greatly helped by the Leprosy Hospital at Moulmein years ago. The son was able to come to the U. S. and he has had a good life here. So now the son is raising money for two leprosy hospitals in Burma in gratitude of the help his father received.

A brother of a former missionary to Burma and the daughter of that missionary annually support an orphanage in Taunggyi and work among the PaOs.

Several children and grandchildren of Burma missionaries are continuing the work of these missionaries by supporting projects in Burma.

Lightning for Learning. An American and Burmese couple visited Burma and two orphanages. They learned the orphans were not motivated to do well in school because if they did well, there was no money to help them continue their education. God called this couple to found Lightning for Learning which is celebrating 5 years of Running the Race of Life to Love, providing scholarships for university students from the Hpu Saw Bu and Kwe Lwe orphanages. In 2016, the team kicked off with a 26.1 mile marathon with donations over \$28,000. Over 70 families now sponsor these students. Every subsequent year the team runs a half marathon, with prayer, support, and supplication for the orphans. 2020 races included a half marathon in Yangon for the Matthew Love clinic building fund, and 6 virtual races: five 5 k races, and another half marathon. Our January 2020 orphanage visits brought joy to see the orphans grow in stature and health, praise God through songs, and exhibit love for each other. Our university students provided testimonies and encouragement to their younger brothers and sisters. It is a privilege to experience God's love through the eyes of these precious youth.

Thank you to our sponsors, our liaison Naw Magnolia, and our partner, Friends of Burma. God makes it all possible because of their dedication.

Our present students include Saw Ja Say Bo (HR Management), Naw Bway Khu (Geography), Saw Mar Gay (Education), Naw Phyo Thandary (Nurse Aide), Saw Nay Zaw (Community Leadership and Social Science), Naw Freedar (Education), Saw Kyaw Htet Aung (Education), and Saw Gler Gler (Seminary). God's Hands and Blessings be upon all these diligent, dedicated, and faithful students!

This family helps the graduates of two orphanages. There are seven other orphanages with no one to help their graduates. Is God calling you to sponsor such graduates? Cost is \$500 per year for each graduate.

Two Karen families each have programs to help the Karens in Burma and FOB partners with them for tax deduction and to get the money in. I praise God that he had touched so many hearts to give to help their people.

These dedicated people so enrich our lives. I like to think that our donors, when they get to heaven, will get to see what their faithful donations have accomplished year after year.

Baptist International Ministries have appointed Eric and Yuree Lembke to be missionaries to Kawthulei Karen Baptist Bible School and College on the Burma- Thai border. They are graduates of Bacone College and are now raising money for their support. Their e-mail is: lembke@internationalministries.org

Another report regarding the \$50 Christmas gifts. These Christmas gifts are given out on the bases of need, not affiliation. Below is an unedited report from Pastor Tlung Awm.

Dear Friends of Burma,

My name is Tlung Awm (Moses) and serving the Lord as a pastor and General Secretary of Myanmar Apostolic Churches Network for 15 years, then doing as a Mission director of Rakhine State mission fields for four years, which is also under Myanmar Apostolic Churches Network.

Pastor Soe Lwin was converted from Buddhist background and now he is doing ministry as a pastor at his home village. He had a gastric two months ago and then he will be doing operation the second time this week (may be on January 5). He is the most financially needy pastor in the current situation.

I did a distribution to him of 65000 kyats and he got it and he was happy for that and he said that it will be very helpful for his medications, thank you so much to you all for your helping me in my difficult situation. God bless you all.

Pastor Soe Lwin is doing pastor work in his home village (Bama village). His church members are converted from Buddhist backgrounds. We (Myanmar Apostolic Churches Network) could not

support him in financial support, but we supported him in prayers and encouragements. Now he is having difficult times for his medication treatment. Please pray for him.

As a village pastor, who does not have a regular salary, it is very difficult when it comes to health issues. This Christmas gift means a lot to him. He was very surprised and happy to receive the gift.

We are so thankful for this Christmas gift program of Friends of Burma. We learnt how to share with the needy in creative ways through this program.

In His Ministry, Pastor Tlung Awm (Moses)

Conference on Micro Credit or Self help groups for March, 2020 postponed.

Naw Paw Gaw was trained in the Philippines to start Self Help groups usually of women to do small businesses to give them income for schools, medicine and their children's needs. Usually she forms groups of twelve to sixteen women and teaches them the fundamentals of business. The women work together helping each other develop small enterprises such as sewing, pig raising, chickens, beauty parlours, small shops, traditional clothing, and so on. She gives them a small loan and they start their businesses. They then pay back their loans so that other groups can be started.

Cyclone Nargis wiped out fourteen of her groups by killing the participants or the products they were raising. One of her helpers lost 47 relatives to Nargis. But Naw Paw Gaw continued to start groups. She is employed by ZOE a Karen Women's Organization. Naturally ZOE wants her to work mostly with Karens but gave her permission to hold a Myanmar wide conference for all other ethnic groups. It was projected to have 60 participants, 10 who have started groups and 50 interested in starting groups. FOB would pay the cost of their coming to Yangon, renting facilities and feeding them. This was to cost \$2,400. It would allow many more other ethnic groups to learn how to form such groups and so give them economic development.

The new participants would pair up and start a group after the conference. If each of the 50 participants started one group, then at least 300 women would benefit. (25 x 12) If each group needed \$300 to start (\$25 loan to each of 12 women) then a total of \$7,500 would be needed as seed money. That was a figure FOB could hopefully meet devoting most of the "use where most needed" funds to it. It has taken years to get ZOE to agree to let Naw Paw Gaw lead this conference and it looked like at last the conference would happen. But then Corona Virus hit and the conference was postponed.

We still have hopes for it in 2021 or 2022.

Here are reports from two Self Help Groups. In Burma, 100,000 kyats make one lakh or \$77.00. So 20,00000 is 20 lakh or \$1,540.00

Mara Chin Women Group

This women group is living in Chin state. The purpose of this group is to support women whose children are students in their family. They create ways to receive more income for education support for their students. For women they only have tradition weaving and agriculture. So woman pastor, Rev. Mai Ki, has a plan for women to earn extra income by a Yam Plantation. It has regular market demand and they can grow in local land and they can receive the seed of Yam plants from the local people.

Rev. Mai Ki has started with Mrs. Ngechai who has 5 daughters and one son. Their family owns only few small pieces lands for traditional farming and it could not afford well for children education. So we provide 300,000 kyats from FOB fund to start the Yam plantation. For one container of seed (16 Kilo) she has to pay 60,000 kyats and she can buy 5 containers. She begins her plantation on June and harvest time is in March. From 5 containers she gets 1,000 plants and from 1,000 plants she will receive 130 Kilogram within 3 years. Every year this lady has to pass one container of seed to another woman until 5 containers have been given but the rest of the products of yam are belongs to Ngechai. The price of yam is 10,000 Ks for .65 Kilo and for 3 years she will gain 20,00000 Ks for 130 kilo. This income is extra income for them apart from their regular farming products. Now Mrs. Ngechai has already passed one container of seeds to another member and she has already started for second year. She is happy and willing to do it because this plantation is in her local place which can work with her family members and she has many experiences and skillful in this work.

The leader Rev. Mai Ki said that in future there will be a new factory of Yam Noodle which will be set up in Mandalay. So it will be a new market demand for them.



Mrs. Ngechai & her Yam harvest



Mrs. Ngechai Family

Samurana Women Group

This women group is led by a pastor wife at Samurana Karen Baptist Church at Bago Township. It has 20 members, and they meet twice in a year. They save the money at least 1000 Ks and above. Most of them are government staff, farmers, house wife and students. In this group they don't have business women but they are willingly organizing themselves to be a group. They have regular saving amount to the group but they never use loan for their private business. They usually take loan from the group for the needs within their family members. By using loan for emergency needs of family they can protect themselves from money lenders who demand the high interest rate in communities. Thus these group members have saved from the danger of unreasonable high rate of interest. In the group the interest rate is reasonable and they decide together that only 3% per month and all interest amounts are going into the group account. This group started from 500000 Ks in 2018 and up to now they get running fund is almost 20,00000 Ks. They have witness that this saving activity is very helpful for their urgent need and they also gain saving habit and also team work spirit.



Thramu Naw Lar (Pastor's Wife)



Samurana women group members

Karen Devotional Book. An FOB board member put together a team that wrote "Karen Stories of God's Glory"—a four month devotional book of Karen experiences in English and Karen. It is available for \$15 post paid from Tansy Kadoe at: tansymu@gmail.com It is really an inspiring book. And it makes graphically clear what the Karens have been through.

WISH LIST.

1. Eye glasses for a needy student \$18.00.
2. Hearing aid for pastor \$50.00
3. Sponsor a self help group for \$300 or a member of such a group for \$25.
4. Scholarship for bright student. \$400 a year for 4 years.

5. The graduates of seven orphanages who could go on, can't due to no sponsor. Cost is \$500 per year, usually a four year program.

Why is #5 more than #4? #4 students have families and churches who will help them some while the orphans have no one to help them.

This newsletter compiled by Diana & Neil Sowards, Saw Htaw Plaw Htoo, Naw Paw Gaw, and information supplied by Dr. Fom Men, our financial secretary in Myanmar.

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Annual Report

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"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." Proverbs 11:25 We can't thank you enough for all you have supported in this time of need in Myanmar. Because of your kii ...

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