

## FRIENDS OF BURMA ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Dear Friends and Supporters of Friends of Burma,

Thank you to every supporter both with funds and prayers who assisted Friends of Burma in 2024. You include people who fed hungry people, gave scholarships to 511 students at 14 Bible Schools and Seminaries, paid the rent for desperately poor people, gave medicines to internally displaced settlements, helped orphans to resettle in safe places away from the chaos of war. You also assisted our board member, Tansy Kadoe, to visit refugee camps on the border with Thailand, where she gave seminars on trauma to leaders who minister to traumatized refugees and who gave comfort and financial assistance to schools along the border.



During the past year we attempted to give personal reports to many donors, as well as a yearly report from the Karen Baptist Convention Care and Counseling Department supervised orphanages, as well as reports from Agape, Sally Right, and Daw Gyi Daw Nge orphanage and old folks home.

In addition to our efforts to address the humanitarian and educational needs that are presented to us, we have helped several other organizations to carry out their very worthy projects when they had difficulties with the financial logistics of making funds available.

Another accomplishment we achieved in 2024 was to contact PayPal, which many of you are using for your donations and clarify to them that we are a genuine 501c3 charity so that, in future, they will not charge us a fee for each transaction. This we did, with help from Lwin Moe, our board member who is in charge of all electronic problems. We thank Lwin Moe for helping us at all times.

And another accomplishment was that we sat down and put together four policies, relating to how we operate and this is looked at by Charity Navigator and may result in a higher score for us.

We are also very grateful to another board member who does our 34 page 990 form for the Treasury Internal Revenue Dept every year. He spends approximately 30 hours to do this work as a volunteer. These reports can all be seen on our website.

We are a small charity and most of our projects involve small amounts of money spread among many different needy people and groups. One project we began several years ago was to give small donations at Christmas time to very needy people, given in a personal way by caring volunteers (who

often added their own funds). The volunteers themselves look forward to doing this year after year and gain great joy in doing this. Some of the stories of how this has impacted people follow.

One gift of \$50.00 went to a midwife who had to move because of the civil war. She has been blind for 26 years and was carried to a new village because of the great flooding that occurred and now is in Toungoo. She felt very lonely in a strange place as a blind person and she gave thanks to Friends of Burma for helping people who are in need like her. Many recipients are astonished that people far away who do not know them care about the lonely and the poor.

Another gift was to a couple, ages 76 and 78 who were living in a displacement camp because of the conflict. When flooding came in 2024 they couldn't come out of their house and had to stay upstairs for 2 days. At that time the man had a stroke and was partially paralyzed. The rescue group came and carried them to a center. His left leg was broken and he now walks with a "helper staff". They thanked the donor for help in buying medicines and food.

The flooding displaced many people. One Buddhist woman, age 85, lives with her daughter who is a domestic worker. Their tent was small and was blown away with the storm and disappeared. They lost everything and couldn't imagine how they would rebuild. They were very happy and gave thanks to the donor.

The recipients of these \$50 gifts are thankful for your encouragement and many also encourage you, the donors, to be strong in every situation. In November, if you wish, you can donate \$50 for the Christmas gift project. We strive to give reports on these donations.

**Tansy's Report (abbreviated) on her trip to Thailand:** Things she did:

1. Attended the International Myanmar Baptist Fellowship Conference which over 200 young people from around the world attended. Held a workshop focusing on cultivating actionable steps to maintain hope amidst despair.
2. Visited a safe house in Mae Sot and distributed essential supplies in refugee camps. Met with a pastor who is establishing a church there.
3. Visited 3 internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and gave 2 truck loads of food and school supplies.
4. Provided funds to make tanks and pipes available for clean water to one of the camps.
5. Visited Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBS) which serves more than 600 students studying for ministry.
6. Visited Kawthoolei Hope Theological Seminary and Learning Center. Led worship service and spoke to students about understanding mental health.
7. Visited Thoo Mwe Kee Migrant School Learning Center which serves 3000 disadvantaged Karen children, youth, refugees, and IDPs. Celebrated World Mental Health Day and spoke to the students about self care.

Tansy arranged all this on her own, utilizing her mental health counseling education and experiences to accomplish her service to the needy on the border. There are many needs we would like to mention.

1. \$25,000 to help plant a church led by Karen Pastor, Rev. Kyaw
2. \$40,000 to rebuild a dilapidated dorm and chapel for KKBBS students and orphans

- 3. \$10,000 to complete faculty housing
- 4. \$25,000 for expenses for the 3000 strong school Thoo Mwe Kee.

Friends of Burma is always looking for help to fund these big projects which we are not able to do on our own.

**Distribution of humanitarian supplies to the IDPs on the border**



**This is the place where your donations made possible the piping for clean water**



**Here is a report showing some of the effects of the conflict that is going on:**

“I would like to tell you about the current situation of Bamaw. At present, our Bamaw city has become a battlefield since December 4, 2024. Therefore many people from Bamaw abandoned their houses and moved to other places for security reasons. Bamaw city is destroyed and many residents are killed. No one can stay in the Bamaw area. Our church and Roberts Mission School are closed because of the battle in Bamaw. My church members and I moved to KIA (Kachin Independent Army) controlled area. By the grace of God, in this area we can use the Internet via Star link. We don't know when we will return to Bamaw. Please pray for our safety and Bamaw.” Name of the principal deleted for security reasons.

For many years we have been supporting the eyeglasses project where schools are selected and students and faculty are able to get eyeglasses. Here are some of the recipients who now have good sight because of you.



Dear Friends of Burma,

I hope this email finds you well.

Firstly, I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the late report of your financial help to our Karen Baptist Theological Seminary.



On behalf of the students, staff and faculty of Karen Baptist Theological Seminary, I am writing to extend our deepest gratitude for your generous financial support, which has enabled us to provide eyeglasses to those in need. Your generosity is a testament to the spirit of compassion and solidarity that binds us together in His ministry.

### **One of the internally displaced persons at Minbu**



A few months ago, a pastor from Minbu contacted me and informed me about IDPs from Ann Township (Rakhine State) who recently arrived in Minbu (Magway Division). They are in need of help. In Minbu, some families rent houses and are struggling to survive. Other families cannot afford to rent houses. His church let them stay in school buildings, which are very old. Sometimes the church provided them with rice and other necessities when they could. He requested my help in finding some donations for the IDPs there. At that time, I didn't have any money on hand. I told him that I would reach out to him when I had donations for the IDPs and asked him to pray. As soon as FOB raised funds to help I contacted him and sent him the donation of 1,008,000 kyats.(approximately \$225 US) He was very happy and felt much relieved. He asked me to convey his deep gratitude to you for your generous donation, received when they were in dire need.

Loikaw is another conflict zone. One of the orphanages had to relocate several places till they found a semi permanent place to stay. Below are two pictures of some of the support which FOB provided for people who had to flee from Loikaw.



These are medicines sent to the Loikaw nurse to help the internally displaced persons fleeing conflict. This is in Taunggyi, which is a safe place.

As you can see from the above stories, we have been busy trying to meet humanitarian needs as best we can. We ask for your prayers for our wisdom to meet the needs in the most effective way. Orphanages need support and many of you have given \$360 per year which goes to partially support one orphan. We are hoping to increase our giving to the seminaries this year. For many years it has been \$20,000 which goes to 14 schools and is used in various ways, including libraries, tuition for students, and faculty support. We are hoping to be able to raise this to \$30,000. Donations can be made for this project. We are so happy that many of you have had confidence in us, some since 1993. We thank you, and pledge that we and the board members are doing our best to meet the needs in the best way.

Recipients of Christmas Gifts say that it means the world to them that someone cares for them.



These two ladies earn a living by selling Moke Hin Ga (Myanmar traditional noodle with soup) in our community for more than 40 years. The profit they make is small and they survive mainly by the donations given to them by a few people in our community.

Recently one was hospitalized at North Okkalapa General Hospital because of some heart problem and she had to stay at the hospital for about one week. Now they are back home (They rent a very small shabby place). While she was hospitalized, her sister attended to her, which meant they had to close their Moke Hin Ga shop.

The hospital prescribed some medicine but they did not buy them, because they did not have money. Upon hearing their needs, I visited them and gave them your love gift. They wanted to buy the medicine with your money, but there was no one to help them. They are very happy to receive a big amount of donation from you. I told them that the donors are from the USA who love Burmese people.

This annual report was put together by Diana Sowards and Lwin Moe and we take responsibility for any inadvertent errors. Best wishes for the New Year. January, 2025