

FRIENDS OF BURMA

Cyclone Update

Special Newsletter Edition



This newsletter has a different focus than it ordinarily would have. *Friends of Burma* is hastily sending this out to inform you what we know from bits and pieces of information coming out of the country.

By now you have heard many stories of the lack of assistance due to government resistance to outside relief organizations. We will focus on what we know of the situation and ask you to pray for wisdom beyond natural ability for our brothers and sisters in Burma who are attempting to distribute aid under dire circumstances.



Many buildings that were not entirely lost, did experience significant damage such as the loss of the roof on this church in San Chaung. Baptist convention offices and the Myanmar Institute of Theology in Rangoon lost roofs and suffered great damage from fallen trees.

One report is from Blooming Night. She is the associate general secretary of the Karen Women's Organization.

There were about 87 churches in Rangoon area destroyed by the Cyclone Nargis with at least 100 of the churches damaged. In all of the areas touched by the cyclone, houses and trees were severely damaged.

In the vicinity of Pathein, many of the villages were destroyed and some disappeared. About 60 churches suffered damage and at least 40 churches were completely

destroyed. At least ten pastors were killed. Estimates on church members killed run from 3000 – 6000. School buildings also were damaged or destroyed. Approximately 20,000 homes were affected and many animals died. Christian victims in this delta area are estimated to be about 100,000.

There are many estimates and we know that they are just that. The Myanmar Baptist Convention Office indicated 291 churches destroyed with 245 of those in villages which were totally destroyed. The Karen Baptist Convention gave a figure of 191 Karen villages destroyed. Of course physical injuries and illnesses, including malaria and dengue fever, will no doubt claim lives as clean water and sanitation will be on-going problems.

Immediately after the disaster, representatives from the Baptist Conventions were sent to gather information and to assist victims to move to disaster relocation sites. With the cooperation of those churches not destroyed and many individuals, distribution of the items – clothes, food and water – was begun.

The Baptist Convention offices and Bible Schools in the Yangon area had roofs destroyed, staff houses destroyed. Obviously with roofs gone and torrential rains, computers and office supplies have been destroyed. A center to care for older people lost its roof as did the clinic.

One communication said that most of the seminary students in the Pwo Karen Seminary in Patheingyi lost some family members and some lost all of their immediate family. Two of the students had gone home for the weekend and were killed by the cyclone.

The cost of water, food and building repairs has increased threefold when it can be secured. Gasoline was reported at \$12.00 a gallon which is more than a month's salary for many.



When the storm surge came up the delta area, huge amounts of salt water entered the river system and deluged the paddy fields. The delta area is the “rice bowl” of the nation. It provided much of the rice and had many farmers with experience and knowledge about rice farming. No one knows how long it will be before this water dissipates and how the saline solution will affect the soil. We do know that given the devastation there will

probably be no rice crop in this area this year and maybe for longer than that.

WHAT IS AHEAD?

As with any massive disaster, we need to plan to lend aid for many months ahead. The uncertain political climate in the country along with outrage at the lack of government cooperation from the government with relief organizations eager to lend assistance to the victims may make for a very unstable environment.

We need to pray very specifically for

- A change of heart for the political leaders
- Wisdom and strength for Rev. Greeta Din who is the head of the Karen Baptist Convention. She is and will continue to be a chief negotiator to allow aid and rebuilding to take place.
- Assistance to be allowed into the areas of dire need.
- Financial aid to be successfully delivered to trusted persons in Burma.
- Leaders to replace those lost in the storm.
- A sense of inner strength and assurance for all involved that God is with them in their weakness and difficulties.

Remember that after the first desperate needs are met

Churches will need to be rebuilt
Schools will need to be rebuilt
Clinics will need to be repaired
Equipment for all of the above will need to be replaced.
Traumatized victims will need to be assisted
Villages will need to be established

FOOD RATIONS REDUCED IN THAI REFUGEE CAMPS

The Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) has not been able to raise sufficient funds to sustain its refugee assistance program for the thirteen camps on the Thai-Burma border. Rations are now being cut for the 130,000 in camps. The rising cost of rice and declining value of the U.S. dollar without increases by donor groups has forced reduction in food to the camps.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PERMITS REFUGEES TO ENTER U.S.

Beginning in 2006 the U.S. government began to permit refugees from camps in Thailand to enter the United States. Up to 40,000 probably will have entered by September or the end of this year. Many refugees readily indicate they are Baptist and seek out Baptist churches.

WHAT IS *FRIENDS OF BURMA* ABLE TO DO?

Immediately after the cyclone devastation, the *Friends of Burma* Executive Committee voted to release all money already in the country for relief efforts and also use up all the mosquito nets on hand for survivors. Since the Baptist Conventions are well organized and have staff already near the devastated area, individuals, as

noted above, moved quickly to assess needs and established four assistance centers.

Due to long term associations and committed people in Burma, *Friends of Burma* has been able to get money into the country when others could not. We

need to pray that these contacts will continue to work in this desperate time.

Friends of Burma this year received 501 © (3) status from the government and is now able to accept donations as a non-profit charitable organization in its own right.

You can donate online, or you can send your donation to *Friends of Burma* @ 548 Home Ave Ft Wayne, IN 46807.

The special website set up to handle your donations for the relief effort in Burma is:

www.myanmarburmarelief.org

Doris Jamane (Tindall) Horton

April 29, 1931 – May 2, 2008

One of our *Friends of Burma* board members until January 1, 2008, Doris Horton left this world May 2, 2008 after suffering a massive stroke in a rehabilitation center while recovering from heart surgery.

Doris was born April 29, 1931 in Princeton, New Jersey to William Edward Tindall Sr., and Mary Kipsey VanHorn, both deceased. She grew up in Trenton, New Jersey and trained as an x-ray technician.

On June 1, 1957 she married David Edward Horton, and they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last year.

Doris is survived by her husband David, brother William Edward Tindall, Jr. of Trenton, New Jersey, her two children, Bethany Horton Klingensmith of Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Mark Alan Horton of Bethesda, Maryland, their spouses James David Klingensmith and Nancy Jocelyn Ilgenfritz Horton, and three

grandchildren, Thomas Robert Horton, Peter Lewis Horton and Anna Katherine Horton, all of Bethesda, Maryland.

Doris had friends all over the country and the world having lived in New Jersey, Michigan, Colorado and Indiana before moving to Green Valley, AZ in 2000. She was a kind, generous, caring and giving person as well as a wonderful wife and mother. She had an abiding faith and a great heart for the ministries of *Friends of Burma*. The family has requested that donations in her memory may be made to *Friends of Burma*, 548 Home Avenue, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

You may send donations directly to

Friends of Burma

548 Home Avenue

Fort Wayne, IN 46807

All contributions are tax deductible.

Or relief donations can be sent to Myanmar Burma Relief Organization (MBRO), P.O. Box 26407; Scottsdale, AZ 85255. MBRO is affiliated with *Friends of Burma*.

Or send direct deposit or bank transfers to

Bank Name: M & I Marshall & Ilsley Bank

Routing Number: 122104046

Account Number: 0045228964

Or go to <http://www.myanmarburmarelief.org/> to use Paypal