

Annual Report for 2010 Friends of Burma, Inc.

Friends of Burma, Inc (FOB) is a 501(C)(3) tax deductible organization. President: Dr. Neil Sowards, 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807. Website: friendsofburma.org E-mail: neildianasowards@juno.com 260 745-3658.

“...in as much as you did it to one of these the least my brethren, you did it for me.”

Matthew 25:40

Friends of Burma, Inc has tried to fulfill this commandment.

The last year has been a hard year for many people, institutions and organizations both here and in Burma. We have worked hard to get as much good as possible from each dollar given us. Many of our donors have suffered a drop in income but have continued to help the people of Burma in spite of the sacrifices required to keep up their giving. We praise God for what Friends of Burma, Inc (FOB) has accomplished in 2010.

We have provided support to 137 orphans in five orphanages. Many children lost one or both parents in Hurricane Nargis. These children are recovering. We were able to help with the building of two dormitories at Hpu Saw Bu and Kwe Lwe orphanages. We also sent money for beds at Kwe Lwe. We have a five minute video on DVD with the story of a Nargis victim going to an orphanage. It is free for the asking or can be seen on our website: friendsofburma.org

We have been surprised by the surge of building that almost every school and clinic has experienced. After years of waiting for building permits, various schools and clinics received not only permits, but ENCOURAGEMENT, to start their buildings immediately. Thus, we have been inundated with requests for building funds. We have not been able to respond to all of these requests in the way as we would like but FOB has donated to the KBC Clinic (now designated a hospital), and the Jubilee Building Annex at Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT). MIT waited four years for their permit.



We also made grants to the Pwo Karen *A new baby in the new Maternity Ward* Seminary at Pathein, Rangoon Home Mission at Ahlone, Pwo Karen Library at Ahlone, Shan State Bible School at Taunggyi, and Myo Bible School. Some years ago the Karens of Pathein started mission work among the Myos in the Arakan. That work has developed to the point they

need ministers, so a Myo Bible School was established at Sitwe. We sent \$400 towards training a Myo leader. Neil and Ardeth visited that school in August 2009 and were impressed with the quality of the students.



New Pwo Karen Seminary Building at Pathein.

The Pwo Karen Seminary in Pathein (picture above) is caring for 153 orphans from Nargis on their compound.

Over 360 students preparing for full time Christian service have received scholarships through FOB. Nine students studying outside Burma have received assistance also. One student was Winber from Mae La Refugee Camp, Thailand studying at Oriental Theological Seminary, India and two collegians at Patkai College both in Dimapur, Nagaland. The other six students are in Thailand, Philippines, England, and Singapore. Each student pledges to go back and teach in Burma.

FOB made \$100 grants per month for a year to four small clinics for medicine for needy patients at Myoma Baptist Church, Sitwe Clinic, Matthew 25 Love Clinic and Bogalay Clinic (in the heart of Nargis devastated area).

We now have an excellent 6 minute video on a DVD about the clinic which we will send free to anyone interested in seeing it. Or you can see it or download it at our website.



Dress making training by Pathein Myaungmya Pwo Karen Baptist Association.

As with most nonprofit charities, we are feeling a drop in donations. Retired donors have experienced a drop in retirement income. In addition, several dedicated donors, with links to Burma, have died. They will be missed. It is for this reason that we are asking donors and interested people to introduce others to the needs of the people of Burma. Indeed, we feel it is a real opportunity for people to support our mission which has such low administrative costs. You should feel proud to relate this to people.

We are also working hard to make our website more appealing. Many people were introduced to FOB after Cyclone Nargis through our website. However, 99% of those donors were one time givers.

Also in an effort to cut costs, we are asking people for their email addresses so we can send the newsletter by that manner. We tried this before, but had so many returns that we gave up. Now, we think most email addresses are more stable than they were and we want to try this again. Even \$.44 saved on postage plus printing costs can help an orphan or a student. E-mail will also allow us to share accomplishments during the year which we hope people will pass on to their friends.

In an effort to reach new persons, Tansy Kadoe has issued a different Friends of Burma newsletter in Karen language for Karens. If you know any Karens who might like to receive it, please send their e-mails to her at: TansyJKadoe@cox.net

In addition, in previous years the US dollar was strong. Just two years ago we were receiving over 1,000 kyats for each dollar. Now that the dollar has fallen in value, we are only getting 810 kyats to a dollar. This means orphans and students are getting less kyats for the same amount of dollars.



Gospel Preaching Trip of Pwo Karen Seminary of Pathein.

Our mailings go to 400 persons and we have received donations from 307 persons and institutions during 2010.

We have done some research on the possibility of being rated as a charity by such rating organizations as Charity Navigator. However, we learned that to be eligible, organizations must be larger than Friends of Burma. FOB spends less than one dollar out of every \$100 received for overhead and promotion. We have only one part time financial secretary who keeps records and distributes donations and gathers thank you letters and receipts. Other administrative costs have been postage and printing of our three newsletters.

FOB received a legacy from the will of one of our supporters. We really appreciate being remembered by those who wish to do mission work beyond their own lifetime.

Stan Murray of Baptist International Ministries is leading a mission tour to Burma in November 2011. He is very knowledgeable about Burma. A brochure is available at: http://switchboard.internationalministries.org/uploaded/burma_2011.pdf

Friends of Burma, Inc. is planning to have a tour in 2013 to Burma when they are celebrating the 200 year anniversary of Adoniram and Ann Judson's arrival.

Up to now each Executive Committee member paid their own expenses in visiting Burma. However, in early January, 2011, for the first time, we allocated money to aid travel expenses for our board member, Phil Schock, to travel to Burma for fact finding and renewal of contacts. We have come to feel that someone from FOB should go to Burma at least every two years. There are things we need to know which can only be learned in face to face contact. And you most certainly will get reports of various activities and contacts he had during his trip. We remain proud of our record of low administrative costs and high percentage of donations going straight to needs. Our overhead and promotion costs will still be less than 1%.



Sewing Machine Training by Pwo Karen Women's Department.

After Nargis FOB received donations from the general public totaling \$47,904 and disbursed through Philip Htoon who went to Burma at his own expense as follows: for blankets, rice, blankets, longyis, mosquito nets, fish paste, sardines, noodles, medical supplies totaling \$28,255. He also paid \$16,500 for C.U.R.E to send a container (truck size 10 x 10 x 40 feet) of donated medical supplies with a market value of \$450,000. Delivery costs for truck rental was \$2119. Overhead here for printing, postage, envelopes, receipts, etc. was \$1,030. Because Philip is Burmese and worked through Burmese organizations he was effective in getting the materials to the victims. A high percentage of relief material brought in by unknowledgeable organizations never reached the victims who needed it.

Friends of Burma, Inc. works with a number of organizations and individuals to help them in their various ministries in Burma. These ministries include printing scripture and religious books, relief work, the translation and printing of Karen religious texts, the printing of study Bibles, training programs and supplying musical instruments to seminaries. We feel honored to assist in these very worthy projects.

URGENT NEEDS.

1. Help with the education of two medical students, Naw May Thanlyin and Saw Wai Yan Yin Htay. Each needs \$2,000 per year. Because of a number of factors, very few Christians are able to get into medical schools so this is a rare opportunity.
2. ECG machine for Matthew 25 Clinic. FOB donated two autoclave machines last year. That clinic had 23,187 outpatients and performed 907 operations.
3. Donations for the Relief Work for Giri victims. Burma was hit by another Hurricane this year called Giri. The death rate was low but 80,000 lost their homes and half the paddy (rice) fields in Rakhine State were destroyed. John and Ruth Peterson raised money for their relief which was given to the Myanmar Baptist Convention to distribute which needs more money.

As we prepare this report for you, we look forward to the Feb 19th meeting of some of our Executive Committee members. Please keep us in your prayers—that we do the right things and make the right decisions, fulfill our obligations to aid the people of Burma in a way that meets their greatest needs. The meeting is open to all and will be at Monte Vista Baptist in Phoenix all day Saturday Feb 19th.

Our Executive Committee is Neil & Diana Sowards, President & Secretary, Phil Schock, Vice President, Jim Tompkins, Treasurer, Dr. David Horton, Tansy Kadoe, Sue Dolbow, John & Ruth Peterson, Adam Maung, Philip Htoon, Nwe Nwe Win, Ardeth Maung Thawngmung, Lew Murdock, May Pearl, Hnin Thet May.

Friends of Burma, Inc (FOB) is a 501(C)(3) tax deductible organization. President: Dr. Neil Sowards, 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807. Website: friendsofburma.org E-mail: neildianasowards@juno.com 260 745-3658.