

Friends of Burma (MYANMAR) Annual Report

January, 2015, Compiled by Neil and Diana Sowards, 548 Home Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46807 260 745-3658. E-mail: neildianasowards@juno.com Website: friendsofburma.org All donations are tax deductible because Friends of Burma, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization.

We are now in our thirtieth year and have completed another successful year due to the continued support of our donors, the hard work of our volunteers, and the many praying for us.

We lost one of our supporters and a good personal friend in the person of Leon Emmert, retired missionary to the Congo. Back in the 1960s he and Martha were scheduled to go to Burma to the Chin Hills but were unable to get a visa, so went to the Congo. He left Friends of Burma (FOB) a legacy gift which enabled us to support two women working among the poor in the Pegu Yoma Mountains, to help with medical needs among the Myo in Sittwe on the west coast, books for KBTS (Karen Baptist Theological Seminary) library, Kachin refugees, and Ywama Clinic. We hope others will make arrangement so they continue to support God's work after they are gone.

This last year saw FOB accomplish a good number of projects. In our Fall Newsletter we pictured a patient being carried up the stairs in the KBC Hospital. A donor saw that and donated \$50,000 to build an elevator shaft and install an elevator. What a blessing this will be to the patients of this hospital!



The Myanmar Baptist Convention awarded 360 Sowards memorial scholarships to children of ministers and Christian workers who are studying for full time Christian service.

The American Jewish World Service gave a large grant to the Karen Women Empowerment. FOB facilitated getting the money into Burma. Most of our donors supported a variety of projects ranging from \$10 a month to \$300 per a year. These donations added up to many people being helped in a variety of ways. Since we can't



report on all fifty programs, let us report on several.

Eye Glasses. Our agent in Burma reports, “We have given eye examinations and prescription eye glasses to many students and faculty at Pa Pun Bible School, Bago Yangon Bible School, Thayawady Bible School, Tedim Chin Bible School, Kya Inn SeikKywi Bible School, Hinthada Bible School, Pwo Karen Bible School, Home Mission Bible School, MIT, MICT, KBTS and Po Key Bible School too. Our agent in Burma gave 72 eyeglasses to the villagers and some missionaries in the Bago Yoma Mountains. As I think especially the villagers felt the care and love of the people who live in the other side of the world. Their eyeglasses help them to do their daily job easily. Help them in their work for living. For some villagers an eyeglass is the thing they have never dreamed in their life. The villagers and Thayawady association say many words of thanks but they could not write. On behalf of them I write this letter and thank all of the members and donors.”

“Naw May Aye Myint from Bago Yangon B/S graduated this year. She wrote a letter to me for FOB in Karen. She thanks FOB very much for her eyeglasses which played an important role in her study to finish her L.Th. degree.”

Mosquito Nets. Another project is Mosquito nets which cost about \$7 for a large one for two people. FOMGB (Friends of Myanmar Governing Board) in Burma decided to give Mosquito nets because Myanmar is one of the countries which is suffering high death rate caused by Malaria and dengue. FOMGB decided to use 15 lakhs (\$1,500) for it out of their budget of \$20,000 for mosquito nets.

From the last year until now they have distributed more than 500 mosquito nets. All FOMGB members had their quota to distribute the nets.

As I know Tharamu Paw Gaw usually distributed to HlaingThaYar. It was an industrial zone and a lot of workers came from the whole country. So many homeless people are living there. Some young workers have to rent a shelter for sleeping. Four people have to share ten feet square shelter.

Dr. Samuel gave his allotment of mosquito nets to Rakhine (Yakhine) state and some to Chin state.. Rev Paw Lu gave them to Delta region when he went there for his mission trip. Tharamu Magnolia and Thara Say Plah gave some nets to Kammalar village (near Pathein) which was burnt down by fire.

Our agent distributed to A Ma Lay village (La Put Ta town ship, Nargis victim area), two BagoYoma villages, A Lel Kyun village and some to NyaungYwa villagers. Some write a short thank you letter in Burmese and Karen.

On behalf of them he would like to thank all donors. He says, “When I was young there were no mosquitoes in my village, NyaungYwa. People need no net. But now a day everybody needs mosquito net. Some use the smoke cone to drive mosquito away. Sometime when I sit in front of my computer I have to use it. We know it is not so good but mosquitoes are coming like a big army to bite. In summer and raining season is worse.

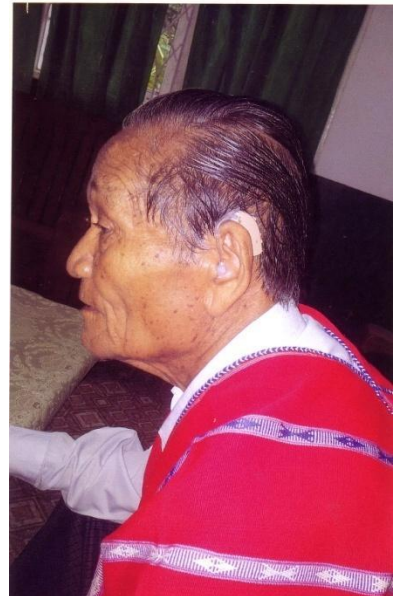
“Without net we cannot sleep well. We need to sleep well for next day to go to paddy field. Some can buy the net, some using their old dirty nets, some still need to sleep under the lone-gyi or dirty blanket.

“Whenever I see little kids are sleeping in sight the mosquito net I remember all of you with thanks. Many people have no money to go to hospital. Whenever somebody is hospitalized, the villagers gather their money for him. A bite of mosquito might cost a lot of money. The net is a great help for those who are struggling for their daily food. A net protecting us from diseases, helping us to sleep well, providing us to gain good health.

“They do not know where the nets come from, they don’t know who give it to them but they received the benefit of the net. I received many words of thanks from the people when I have given the mosquito net to them. Thank you very much for helping, caring and loving us.”

Sincerely, Saw Russ Kadoe

Hearing Aids. Another small project is hearing aids for ministers. Rev. James Kimban -He is a pastor from Paan and he served for 10 years as general secretary of Mawlamyine- Paan Association and he is 78 years old and his service is almost 50 years.

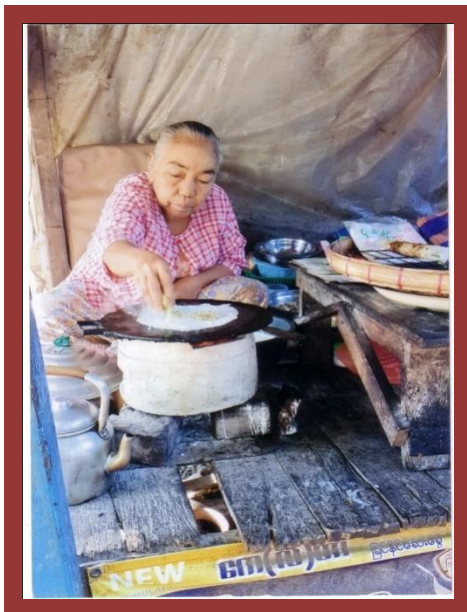


Rachael Micro Finance Group. We, A sho Women Micro Finance group were founded in 2006, January and received initial fund 3, 00,000 Kyats (about \$300) from Friends of Myanmar Board. Secretary Rev. James Kimban of A sho Baptist Women Organization, Sayama Mai Thant Oo were trained by Tharamu Naw Paw Gaw on Micro Finance. We started from 11 members and now we have 37 members and in 2013 we have 20, 00,000 Kyats (about \$2,000) for revolving fund and we could pass on 3, 00,000 Kyats which FOB gave us to the next groups. Most of our members are housewives who are making more income to support their family members. We save 1000 Kyat per month and once in a month we have monthly meeting. I would like to share about two members.

Naw Gay Moo Paw Doh: “I am a wife of minister and also I am a minister. As I have 2 kids, I could not work outside like my



husband and stay at home as a house wife. I was eager to learn computer service business for I knew that it could make business at home. My husband also agreed it but we did not have enough money to buy a computer. As we were organized by Yangon Kayin Baptist Women Association as a Micro Finance Group, we formed a group and started to save money in 2008. After became a microfinance group I borrowed 300000 Ks (about \$300) and added with some of my money to buy a computer. I learned more about computer and at last I became a trainer for photo shot .I gave training and at the same time I provided photo shot service at home. Moreover I could buy a small plastic binding machine and used it for more providing services. I could repay my loan and save regularly and also could take new loan for my new investment of my home business from microfinance group. From my income I could support my children education and even for other children. I thank Friends of Burma for empower women like me who can make home business and at the same time take care of our families.



Daw Hla Yee -She is a widow and she makes traditional snack for her income. She has children but her daughters also have to struggle for their own family and could not support her. She does not invest much for her business but she gains profits from her snack making. Through her making snack she could support her own daily food and even could save some money for her own. She takes loan from Rachael Micro Finance Group and she can pay back it on right time and also save her saving regularly. She also participates in her Church activities and has team spirit

Burmese Students. As many of you know, back in the 1990's, when Burma's universities were closed, we had several students from Burma live with us while they went to school. Some lived with us for up to five years. One lived with us four years. Another two years. Some lived a semester with us and then went to another school. All

received varying amounts of financial aid and most received substantial emotional aid.

At times we have been disappointed in the return on our investment, but on the whole, most have become supporters of FOB, and some have become valued board members.

Our intention for all were that they return to Burma and give back to their country, but that was not realistic on our part, as most of them could not make a living back in Burma.

I would like to tell you about one of the students, who is giving significant service to her country and she and her husband are doing this with great sacrifice and no assistance from FOB.

Mawchi aka Show Ei Ei Tun reports: She and her husband, Kapi, have moved to Yangon. " Saw Kapi is heading Thabyay Education Foundation (www.thabyay.edu) since Feb 2014, and I joined Nathan Associates for a USAID-funded Economic Reform and ASEAN Integration for Burma project starting May 2014.

Outside our paid work, we co-teach three evenings a week at Liberal Arts Program of KBTS (two sessions of “critical thinking and writing” and MIT (one session of “political thoughts and practices”)

We are also in the process of setting up a home-grown think tank called Salween Institute for Public Policy (www.salweeninstitute.org).

We are also actively exploring possibilities and opportunities to start a small social enterprise or socially responsible business together with some of our like-minded friends from civil society and church communities. We don’t have anything concrete yet of where, what and how exactly but we want to make sure that we can generate much needed funds for the communities, create dignified jobs, and empower communities and local institutions. There are already some good models in town but doing business in Burma isn’t that easy for ordinary people with skyrocketing property prices and unclear or confusing regulatory environments. “



Why do I support Friends of Burma? It has no one paid in the U.S. and only a small sum to one person in Burma; it channels into places of need funds to support ministries by trusted persons. I have been impressed again and again at the trustworthiness and sacrifice so many make to serve Christ and meet human need in Burma. Now is the time to give financial aid before inflation begins to rise as outside groups enter the country to do business.

John Peterson, FOB Board Member

Friends of Burma, Inc. received \$455,749 in donations and other organizations. Counting what will be distributed at our Annual Meeting, all was distributed.

Wish List.

1. Eye examination and prescription glasses.....\$17. each
2. Supporting an outstanding student from a village to study in Pathein.....\$300.
3. Support Naw Daina Win, an orphan for one year.....\$240.
4. Book “Where There Is No Doctor” for village health workers,..\$4.50 each.....\$270 class.
5. Sponsor an Entrepreneur Group for twelve women\$300.



6. Weaving loom for Micro Credit group.....\$500.
7. Support a free clinic for a month.....\$1,200.
8. Provide relief for Kachin Refugees.....\$2,000.
9. Help Myanmar Institute of Theology build a six apartment building.....\$110,000.

Neil's project for the 200th Judson Celebration was writing "The Last Baptist Missionaries 1946-1966. It is available on Amazon.com for about \$9.

It is not generally known but several retired missionaries and/or their families and relatives have continued their work in Burma. In one case supporting a school he started as a missionary, in other case supporting work among the people their parents worked with.

One of FOB's services is channeling money into Burma for other organizations. We have a U.S. Treasury Department, Office of Foreign Asset Control license to do this. Last year we did it for the American Jewish World Service, The Hackett Foundation, the De Boer Foundation for Mary Chapman Deaf School, and the Global Women.

Neil is helping three other organizations similar to Friends of Burma, Inc. They are Friends of India Mission, USA Friends of Haiti, and Focus on Congo. He is writing a manual on how to create these organizations to increase support for our missionaries. If Baptist International Ministries takes the step of encouraging such organizations, they could increase the support for missions by 8 million a year.

E-mail version in color can be sent on request which can be passed on to friends or it can be downloaded from our website. Please send us addresses of anyone you know who might be interested in what we do and pray and support us.

Donations can be sent to 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807 and are tax deductible.