

NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF BURMA, INC.

FALL EDITION

SEPTEMBER 2025

ANNOUNCEMENT

Some changes are coming to Friends of Burma. We want to continue this work we have been doing since 1985 but we are aging (Neil is 88 in September and Diana is 86 in December). For years, we have prided ourselves on being an all volunteer charity but this is no longer the case. For the first time we are having to pay an accountant to do the onerous 990 form which has to be done every year. It became too difficult for a volunteer to do. Also we are planning to delegate some of the duties to members of the board of directors. To this end, we are having a meeting of some of the board members in October. We still intend to have an active part and we will look into privately funding any of the increased costs of running this charity. This is just a heads up because we want you all to be aware that we value your support over the years and want you to know that the great need is there. Your support is greatly appreciated by the recipients inside Burma and on the border. Thank you all for loving the people of Burma.

Neil and Diana

NEW NURSING SCHOOL OPENS WITH STRONG DEMAND

With a generous donation from a retired nurse educator to help it get started, a new nursing school officially opened in Kawthoolei on April 29, 2025, with high interest from prospective students. The school received 130 applications, though only 30 students were admitted into the first class.



The program spans 3 and a half years. Tuition, room, and board total about **40,000 baht (USD 1,300) per year**, amounting to approximately **USD 5,200** for the full course. Instruction will be led by a small faculty team with experience in nursing education, supplemented by visiting lecturers. Faculty members will earn **6,000 baht per month**, reflecting the modest but stable resources currently available.

Graduates are expected to commit to three to five years of community service, a requirement designed to strengthen local healthcare systems. One of the school's main challenges remains securing clinical practicum opportunities, with efforts underway to seek partnerships and potential support from the authorities. Despite these hurdles, the launch of the program is seen as a significant investment in education and a step toward improving long-term community health.



BURMESE ARTIFACTS FOR SALE

A CHANCE TO GIVE BACK

This special collection features original artworks from Burma(Myanmar), including watercolors, lacquerware, oil paintings, and handcrafted furniture. The pieces were donated by the Sowards family, whose deep ties to Burma date back to their missionary work from 1921 to the 1960s.

Each purchase supports Friends of Burma, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping communities in Burma affected by conflict, displacement, and poverty. All proceeds go directly to aid efforts. By acquiring a piece of Burmese heritage, you are also offering hope and support to those in need.

Here is the website to check them out: <https://arts.friendsofburma.org/>



All Artifacts



Oil Paintings



Water Color Paintings



Lacquer Artifacts



Teak Wood Items



Furniture



THE IMPACT OF ENDING USAID FOOD SUPPORT

The USAID-food support effectively ended around the end of July 2025, when The Border Consortium's US-funded food voucher program and much of the assistance to refugee camps along the Thailand–Myanmar border ceased or was drastically reduced.

This has left refugees, schools, and orphan groups along the Thailand–Burma border facing serious food shortages. The image on the right shows a refugee family on the Thai Burma border (Image: Karen News)



Families in camps are cutting meals and facing higher risks of malnutrition. Schools and orphan programs struggle to feed children, which threatens health, learning, and long-term development. The loss of aid also increases risks of school dropouts, child labor, and exploitation. Local groups are under pressure to find new resources, but gaps in support remain urgent. FOB was informed about the ending of the rations for KKBBSC 400 students. This is affecting a lot of people as it is also difficult for private donations to meet the enormous demand.

STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL: ESCALATING CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN ETHNIC STATES

The conflict between the Burmese military and ethnic armed organizations in Kachin, Kayah, and Chin states has intensified since the 2021 military coup, which triggered nationwide resistance.

In these ethnic minority regions, longstanding grievances over political marginalization, resource control, and autonomy have fueled insurgencies for decades, but the post-coup period has seen unprecedented alliances between ethnic groups and newly formed resistance forces.

The military's heavy-handed operations, including airstrikes and ground offensives, have led to widespread human rights violations and destruction of civilian infrastructure. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, fleeing to jungles, border areas, and temporary camps with little access to food, healthcare, or shelter. These internally displaced persons (IDPs) face severe humanitarian challenges, with limited international aid reaching conflict zones due to security and access restrictions.

By Lwin Moe



Civilians in Chin State taking shelter from airstrikes (Image: Myanmar Peace Monitor)

MATTHEW 25 LOVE CLINIC EXPRESSES GRATITUDE FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT

At Matthew 25 Love Clinic, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible support we have received from our friends and partners. Your generosity has made a real difference for our patients and the continued operation of our clinic. This year has been challenging. New government regulations for clinics brought unexpected costs, and meeting these requirements seemed daunting. Yet, through the prayers and support of our donors and the Friends of Burma (FOB) members, we were able to overcome these obstacles. Your contributions have allowed us to enhance our clinic's infrastructure and patient care, including the installation of a **wastewater treatment tank**, **fire safety equipment**, and **high-flow nasal cannula machines** for patients in need.



We also celebrated a remarkable milestone during the 175th Pathein Myaung Mya Association Thanksgiving: our team successfully performed **175 cataract eye surgeries**, restoring sight and hope to patients in our community. This achievement is a testament to the combined efforts of our staff, volunteers, and supporters like you.

Your steadfast support gives us the strength to continue our mission, serving vulnerable communities with compassion and care. From all of us at Matthew 25 Love Clinic and Pathein Myaungmya Association, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Words cannot fully express our appreciation. We look forward to sharing more stories of impact and hope with you in the months ahead.



WISH LIST

- ★ Donations to the new nursing school for **clinical practicums, faculty, and operational needs** (any amount is welcome)
- ★ Burmese Artifacts for **Sale**
- ★ Donations for the rations of 400 students at KKBBSC impacted by the ending of USAID food support (any amount is welcome)
- ★ Support for **funding, medical equipment, infrastructure enhancement** for Matthew 25 Love Clinic (any amount is welcome)
- ★ Donations for the urgent needs on **food, healthcare, shelter and protection** of the displaced communities (any amount is welcome)
- ★ Glasses for students, \$18.00 each

This newsletter was compiled by Zoe Maung and Naw Kanyaw Paw. Please notify us if you wish to be on the e-mailing list and feel free to pass along the printed copy or e-mail version of this newsletter. Please visit our website to view all other information that could not be included in this newsletter. Thank you all for reading and please continue to pray for Burma.

Neil & Diana Sowards, 548 Home Ave., Ft. Wayne, IN 46807

Phone: 260-745-3658

Email: neildianasowards@gmail.com

Website: friendsofburma.org

You can donate online via PayPal, Zelle (Zelle account: neildianasowards@gmail.com), or checks via mail. (Please make checks payable to Friends of Burma, Inc.)