

Friends of Burma, Inc. Newsletter

Spring 2016

We are thankful for the opportunity to work together with friends from the U.S.A to help meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Burma. The Lord has been great to us and we want to highlight some of the success stories as well as a new initiative for supporting orphan students who finish high school and plan to attend college or trade schools.

Lightning for Learning

Back in January, 2016, FOB was approached by a dynamic, mission oriented, family in Tacoma, Washington. This family of mother, father, son, and daughter, were actively raising funds to allow those graduates of the Childcare Centers who had successfully matriculated (passed the final secondary school testing) to continue attending college or trade schools.

This family has given concerts, run races, and solicited donations for these outstanding students. They call themselves **Lightning for Learning**. In April, Friends of Burma sent the first \$4,500 for the further education of 10 of these young people. This is \$450 per year for each student. FOB is honored to be able to assist in this project, which will be continuing.



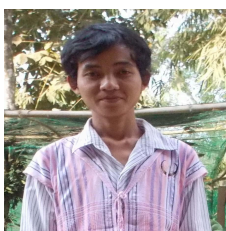
Saw Si Lah

His parents were lost in the Nargis cyclone which killed 134,000 people in May 2008. Pathein-Myaungmya Association leaders sent him to the Childcare Center with his brother Saw Ger Gler. He finished 11th grade in 2011-2012 academic year and currently he is in his second year in the university distance learning program. He has a job from Go Forward press by KBC (Karen Baptist Convention). He works very hard to become a good leader for serving the Lord. He is now studying at Liberal Arts Program from K.B.T.S.(Karen Baptist Theological Seminary).



Naw Margret

She was sent to the Childcare Center since she was seven years old because her parents passed away. She is a student who is hardworking in her studies and helps the teachers as well. She finished the 11th grade in 2013 -2014 academic year. She is currently attending university distance learning program and in her third year. She lives with the family of Rev. Thein Aung Htay's daughter in Yangon and helps them as she can during her school year.



Saw Mar Gay

He was a resident at one of the Childcare Centers since he was seven years old, because his parents passed away. He was a hard working student and very helpful to the teacher. He passed Grade 11 in 2013-2014 Academic year. After that he was eager to serve in God's ministry. Now he serves in the mission field as a good servant for God, and he joined the University distance learning program. He is a first year student.



Saw Kyaw Htet Aung

He has been at one of the Childcare Centers since the Nargis Cyclone and his parents were lost at that time. He is a young man who is eager to become a businessman. He also is a hard working student and passed grade 11 in 2014-2015 Academic Year. Now he is working at Chief textile mill, and enrolled in the University distance learning program. He is also a first year student at the university.



Naw Freedar

She was admitted to one of the Childcare Centers since she was a child because her father passed away and her mother built a new family. She is smart and hard-working in her studies. She finished Grade 11 in 2014-2015 Academic year. Currently she is enrolled in Patheingyi University. She would like to become an instructor or professor at the university.



Saw Ger Gler

His parents were lost in Nargis Cyclone. Patheingyi Myaungmya Association leaders sent him to the Childcare center with his brother Saw Si Lah. He passed Grade 11 in 2014-2015 Academic Year and is currently helping the child care center as he can. He is enrolled in University distance learning program and is a first year student. He tries hard to become a good leader for his country. His ambition is to become an engineer.

Micro Credit Groups. Naw Paw Gaw works with the Yangon Karen Women’s Development Group and she sets up microcredit groups of six to twelve women who each develop a business plan to provide income for her family. Projects include sewing, raising chickens or hogs, small retail shop, gardening, buying wholesale and selling retail, etc. The group works together to help each develop her business.

Here is a report from one of her group members. Ma Oo Bin Zone Women Micro Finance Group is composed of families headed by women. They had received a grant in 2014. This group has a leader, secretary and treasurer. They have organized the group as a church women’s group and gave initial loan to the members beginning from \$50 to \$70 for individual loans. The interest charge of loan is 5% per month while other money lenders is 10%-15% in the villages.

The group started the capital amount from \$300 and within two years they have received back more than \$500. They contributed \$45 to Yangon Kayin Baptist Women Association for Endowment Fund. They also contributed some amount to their zone’s women leadership training. The women group has a plan to rotate the revolving fund within their 3 zones.

Among the members, we would like to report about 4 women headed households:

1. My name is **Naw Helen Htoo**. I have one sister and she is a school teacher. We both are single women. We still have both parents who are in old age. To take care of my parents, I choose to work at my house while my sister is teaching at school. I took loan from my micro finance group and with my own money, I did betel leaves plantation nearby my house. As our culture, we can use betel leaves for



herbal medicine and especially my required market is those who eat betel quid every day. When the leaves grow mature enough to eat, we pick the leaves twice in a month. We can sell it during four months, and we get 2500 kyats for one viss. Approximately we receive net profit 400,000 Ks (\$400) per season.

We thank FOB for giving us financial resources to organize micro finance group to get loans in reasonable rate. Now I can support my parents not only by my strength but also by financial support. As my sister has income as a teacher, I also get income even while staying at my home. This experience makes me to have more confidence in my life as a single woman headed household.



2. I am **Naw Ee** and I live with my widowed mother who is 80 years old. I work as a teacher at a village school which is far from my house. My mother is getting weak in physical and when I go to school she is alone at home. So I have decided to resign from my work to take care of my mother at home. I also serve the Church as a women's group secretary when we started to form a group. I was the one who participated in this group as one of the leaders at the group.

I also have a sister called Naw Eh Htoo who is my coworker for our own business. We took loan from the micro finance group, opened a shop and sold dry fishes, fish paste and betel quid. Our daily income has covered our expenses and even we could save some amount from the profit. Now we could give back our partial amount of the loan as the process in the group.

3. My Name is **Naw Paw Bway Htoo** and I have 3 children. My husband has suffered TB disease for many years and could not do heavy work. When the group of micro finance was organized I became a group member and as the process of our group I took loan from the group and I raise the native chicken at home. My husband and children could help me in raising the chicken. I got income from working in paddy field but raising chicken at home also support the needs of my family.



4. My name is **Naw Thay Thwe** and my husband became disabled when he was working in someone's paddy field as a daily laborer and now his left leg does not has enough strength to work in the paddy field. I have 6 children and it is very difficult to get income to cover the expenses for my family. So now I myself and my 2 older kids are working at paddy field and also bean plantation. We took loan for bean plantation from the group. After harvest time

we could give back our loan as the process of back payment of loan. Because of loan service charges

is reasonable, it covers the expenses for plantation and making us gain benefit from bean plantation. We really thank FOB for providing this program which brings income for my family to survive.

Report from Saw who helps us in Burma. "I am going to Pu Saw Bu tomorrow to send five kids from Bago Yoma to study there. I will give the last portion of donations for clinics to Myaungmya clinic too.

I distributed 37 mosquito nets at Ywathit Village at Twantay Township. That is the place of mango and mosquitoes. It is about 3 hour drive from Nyaungywa. We participated in worshipping program. My cousin preached



and I have to pray for them. Each of 36 families received a net. They thanked FOB so much. They gave us 4 full



bags of mangoes. It is impossible for us to eat all of them so we distributed in Nyaungywa. I also thank FOB for receiving mangoes from them. Some said they were still using the old dirty nets and keeping the new one for visitors.

I would like to say thank you to FOB for protecting poor people from mosquito bites. Now the time of mosquitoes is starting. I distributed some other mosquito nets to nearby villagers.

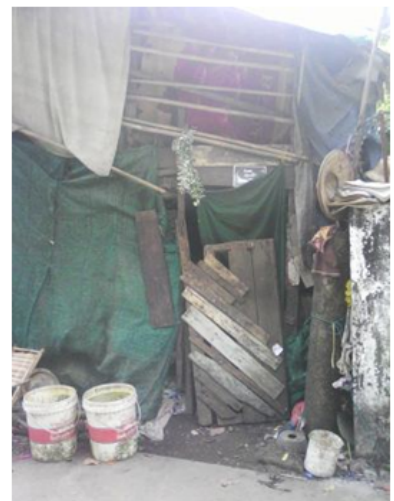
It is too hot here. The monsoon will be started soon. Sincerely Saw"

Twenty Dollar Christmas gift. Sometimes we stumble on to a meaningful program. A report from Neil:

A person in our church at Fort Wayne gave the minister \$400 with the instructions he was to give twenty dollars to twenty members with the instructions to keep \$10 for themselves and give \$10 to a person that \$10 would encourage, make them feel good about receiving it, and feel someone cares about them. I thought it was a good idea. Most of the people I love do not need Christmas gifts but Christmas is the time of giving. So I decided to repeat the project in Burma. I gave out five gifts to five friends with the same instructions. Here is one report.



Dear Neil & Diana,
Thank you so much for receiving \$20. As you want me to give \$10 to those who are in need I've already given to them but I also want to



participate in this contribution and I added my \$10 to this contribution. The needy people are 3 Indian Christian orphans, and their mother recently died and their father died 10 years ago. They live in Aung Kyaw Gone. The elder girl has to have a medical checkup because she takes care of her mother who has HIV almost 3 months closely without knowing about AIDS. Their house also needs to repair it because it is not safe for young girls. I've never known them before but when I heard about them I felt so sorry for them I went to their house and give this \$20.

I am sending you a picture taken before their mother died, and their house.

In His service,

Naw Paw Gaw

We are planning to offer this program in our Fall Newsletter. The feedback we received suggested we suggest \$50 (\$10 plus \$40) which will really help more rather than five \$20. We are going to try and raise money on a public funding site. If you would like to help with this project, please contact us at: president@friendsofburma.org

Burma (Myanmar) Tour: We are hoping to do a joint tour with Baptist International Ministries in 2017. It will probably be a two week tour and participants would meet many of our fine Christian friends there and also many of the fabulous tourist sites. If interested, please contact Leslie Turley for more details at: leslie.turley@internationalministries.org

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of Friends of Burma, Inc. was held in Peoria, AZ. Michele Kessler and Dr. John Graveley joined the board, Judy Lundy came back on the board, and Baptist International Ministries was represented by Jim Wiegner and Leslie Turley. It was a very good, positive meeting. The next annual meeting will be in Fort Wayne, IN in July 2017 because Adam is going to work in Burma.

Wish List.

1. **Microcredit:** \$300 to start a group of six women to do business.
2. **Scholarship money** for an aspiring composer and musician studying in Silliman University. He is from Ko Tha Byu Seminary. About \$4000 more per year is needed for 4 years.
3. Ongoing support of **orphans and children in need** at the childcare facilities. \$360 per year per child. This does not completely support each child. The other funds are raised there in Burma.
4. **Medicated Mosquito Nets:** These are treated so mosquitoes won't bite through them. They are quite effective in preventing malaria because the mosquitoes bite mostly at night. Cost is \$8 each.
5. **Eye Glasses.** \$17 per student. For the whole story go to: <https://goo.gl/6WCVxd>
6. **SakHanTha Health Workers Training School.** They would like to give each graduate a copy of "Where There Is No Doctor" books at \$4 each. 160 books are needed each year. \$640. They would also like to give each student a copy of "Where There Is No Dentist" book at \$4 each. 160 are needed \$640. For a write up about this school, go to: <https://goo.gl/7xM31M>

This newsletter was prepared by May Pearl Cartee, Diana Sowards, Neil Sowards and Lwin Moe.

Wanted: English translation of Saw Aung Hla, History of the Karens, 1939. Does anyone have this book or know where we can get it?

Critical Thinking. We are gathering material that teach Critical Thinking. Can anyone help us?

Resources:

The Last Missionaries, May Pearl Cartee & Neil Sowards, Amazon.

Games Played in Mai Lai Refugee Camp, Neil Sowards, Lulu & Amazon.

Life in Burma, Neil Sowards, Amazon & Lulu.

Electronic copies are freely available on Friends of Burma website: <http://friendsofburma.org/resources>

Friends of Burma, Inc. 548 Home Ave. Ft. Wayne, IN 46807

Tel. 260-745-3658, Website: <http://friendsofburma.org>, Email: neildianasowards@juno.com



Micro Credit women working together to make money.