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FRIENDS OF BURMA ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009

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**A COMMITTEE OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS
FOR AIDING THE PEOPLE OF BURMA**
Website: friendsofburma.org E-mail: neildianasowards@juno.com

January 2010

KBC Clinic Report

The past year has seen some great accomplishments. We celebrate the completion of the Karen Baptist Convention Clinic in Insein. They tore down their old one story building and constructed a beautiful three story clinic, which they dedicated on October 11, 2009. The official that attended the dedication ceremony told the clinic they should expand the Maternity Ward and gave them written permission, so they are going ahead on that unexpected opportunity. Neil visited the clinic in August, 2009 and found it well used and highly regarded. So we are trying to help them raise money. It can be extremely difficult to get a building permission there. So when the opportunity presents itself, we hope we can make a significant contribution.



New KBC Clinic (above)

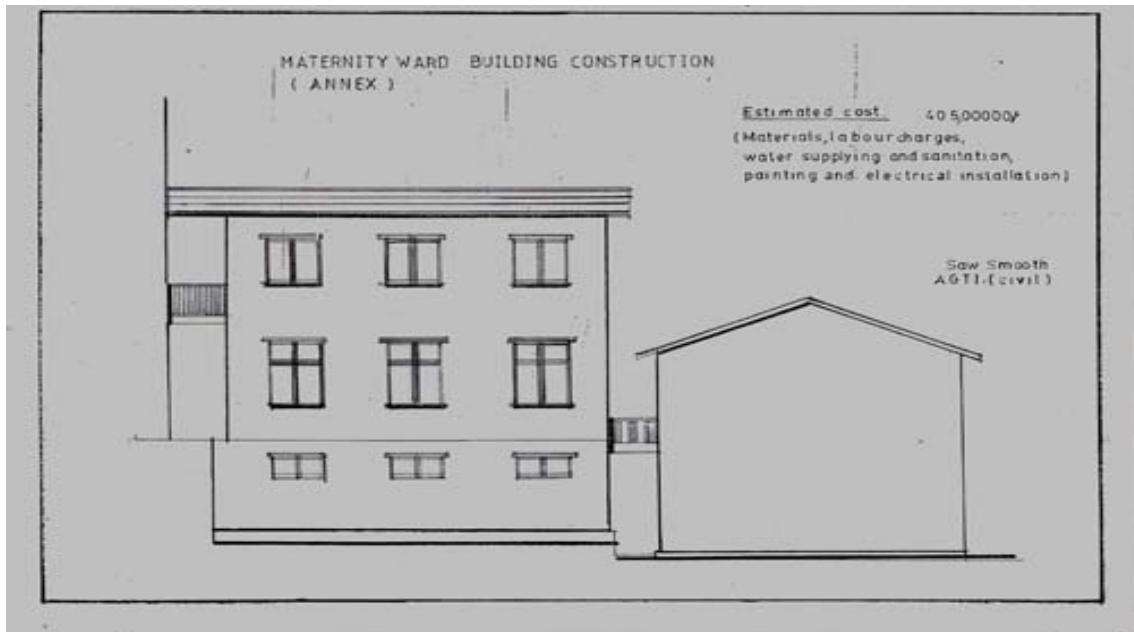
There is a new x-ray machine at the Clinic given by an FOB board member in memory of his wife. What a wonderful way for a person to be remembered!

The Clinic has produced a short video on its work and what it means to one couple. It can be seen at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pU-N8mQQ_D4 or at <http://friendsofburma.org> or can be ordered for \$5 postpaid.

New X-ray machine (below)





Drawing of the proposed maternity ward

Orphanages

The whole country is still struggling to overcome the setback from Cyclone (Hurricane) Nargis of May 2008. For example the Pwo Karen Seminary at Pathein found themselves caring for 153 orphans on their compound. Two other orphanages, Kwe Lwe and Pu Saw Bu received an additional 39 and 41 orphans, putting a real strain on their overcrowded facilities. So the need for orphan sponsors is very great.

Other orphanages FOB supports are Hpu Mooler, Thandaungyi, Grace Care, Agape, and Kayah Poo, and Kyauk Gyi.

FOB also aids the Three Sisters' Orphanage, a Youth Hostel, and another orphanage connected with the Karen Baptist Church in Taunggyi, Shan state.



Children in need of care in school uniform



Children receiving medical checkup

Bible Schools

Neil visited Sitway on the Arakan coast and saw the Myo Bible School for the first time. The Myo mission field is a relatively new field—the work of the Pathein-Myaungmya Baptist Sgaw Karen Association. Great progress has been made to the point of the Myos becoming organized into the Myo Baptist Convention within the Myanmar Baptist Convention. Several members of FOB and a church in Maine have faithfully supported evangelists there for years.

Good news was received from Myanmar Institute of Theology. After waiting five years for permission to build the annex onto the Jubilee Building, it has been received and now construction can begin. That will give more space to BARS (Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies) which now has six majors and whose graduates are well thought of and in demand by businesses and NGOs (Non Government Organizations). In fact, some of the past students are doing better financially than their former teachers.

FOB also helps the Shan State Seminary. Twenty five years ago that Bible School had 40 students. Now it is a Seminary with 140 students. The long serving principal retired and is giving his time free to the Myo Bible School at Sitway. Such dedication!

Libraries

Dr. Chit Maung library – There are 337 paid members, 160 of which are new members. There are 3 paid staff members and 3 regular volunteers. It is a Chit Maung family operation. There was a Summer English course for children with 192 participating. There are regular weekend English classes with 109 participating. There are several fund raisers, including Library Day, Christmas celebration, and a Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking Workshop. With the help from FOB, Dr. Chit Maung library constructed a computer room and opened the Internet cafe in August 2009. By far the greatest circulation is Burmese periodicals and Burmese children's books. They have also added an exercise room with equipment.

Lay Nyin Thit Library – Neil also visited Lay Nyin Thit library in Taunggyi and learned it is still going strong and now has nine branches or reading rooms.

Education Ministry



It is God's grace that I meet another year with good health. At the moment, I am doing my thesis and it is about successful English language learners from Myanmar. As English is the universal language of the world, people use it as a tool to communicate as a means for both social and economic advancement. Many research and theories have shed light on language learning. However, there is little research in this area in a developing country like Myanmar. Therefore, my study pays attention to how successful English language learners from Myanmar learnt the language; how they overcame difficulties and what made them successful. Hopefully, the information from this study will be useful for educators and teachers to understand more about the learners and help develop more effective curriculum.

I hope that the Lord will use me for His glory. Last but not least, this is my New Year wish to everyone, who is a part of Friends of Burma, "Have a blessed and joy filled New Year and May the Lord's Grace and blessings be upon you in all your ways" His peace be with you.

Naw Ler Blute Po, Thailand

Naw Ler Blute Po

The threads of missions intertwine in amazing ways. Years ago a couple at First Baptist Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana supported a young Karen man in his study for full time Christian service at Shan State Baptist Bible School at Taunggyi, Burma. He graduated and went to teach at the Naga Bible School way up north in Khamti, Burma. Just across the border two Naga young people completed their studies at Oriental Theological Seminary, Nagaland, India and then volunteered to teach at Kawthulei Karen Baptist Bible School in Mai La Refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. Three Karen graduates of that school came as refugees to Fort Wayne with 1700 others and are helping with the Karen Christian Fellowship at Fort Wayne Baptist Church (formerly First Baptist Church).

God's timing. A few years ago we had a request for money from a Karen who was studying for the ministry in Australia. We were able to loan him \$1,000 with the stipulation that if he went back and served in Burma, the loan would be forgiven. If he did not go back, then he should repay FOB. This year he suddenly appeared in Fort Wayne and told us that his congregation had begged him to continue as their minister after he finished his studies. He prayed about it and decided it was God's will to continue to serve the Karens in Australia. He then handed me \$1,000 to repay his loan. I was almost struck dumb. The week before, we had received a request to help a Karen young man to study at Oriental Theological School (OTS) in Nagaland, India. The timing was such that it seemed to be God's will we give the thousand dollars to support Saw Winber from Mae La Refugee Camp to OTS. He needs another thousand dollars and a computer that is required by the school. Fortunately, two persons gave money for the computer but we still need to raise a thousand dollars for his school expenses.

Other Ministries

Friends of Burma supports several other smaller ministries, on which we don't always report. The following three are examples:

- FOB supports projects led by Paw Wah Doh in Shwe Gyn area. One of her projects is training teachers for Preschool nurseries. Her students have gone out and started 93 nursery schools. She is also creating jobs for people by making toys to be used in these pre-schools.
- FOB donated copies of health books for distribution in villages in Kachin State, including "Where There is No Doctor." This project is led by Sayama Rawny.
- A complete list of our ministries can be found at: <http://friendsofburma.org/cgi-bin/mt/mt-search.cgi?IncludeBlogs=2&tag=ministries&limit=20>
- Karen refugees from various camps along the Thai border have continued to come but the U. S. Government has cut back the number to about half of what was projected for 2009 because of the difficulties of finding employment and in some places there have not been enough local help in integrating them. Sad to say there are American Baptist Churches who have not helped these products of our mission work.



Educational toys made for pre-schools in Shwe Gyn



Sayama Rawny distributes health books in Kachin State.

Your gifts make a difference!

In spite of the recession, FOB has continued to receive strong support. It appears that most of our supporters feel our work is important and have not cut back even though I am sure many are feeling the pinch. We give thanks for their commitment to God's work in Burma.

All the work of Friends of Burma, Inc in the U. S. is done by volunteers. This may change in the future as Neil and Diana age. FOB has one paid employee in Burma. The Friends of Myanmar Governing Board in Burma is made up of volunteers. The overhead of FOB is due to the cost of printing and mailing the three newsletters per year which are composed by unpaid members of the Executive Committee.

Legacies from Wills

This year we received two legacies from wills of two people who faithfully supported FOB through the years. Diana and I have made out our wills and remembered FOB because we want to continue to support this work. We hope you will want to do so too.

2010 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Friends of Burma, Inc will be Saturday, February 27 in Phoenix, Arizona. It will be at 9 AM at Monte Vista Baptist Church. It is an open meeting and all are welcome. As required by the IRS for 501(c)(3) organizations, only the Executive Committee members can vote on motions but anyone can express an opinion.

Summary of Greatest Needs

1. Money to build the Myanmar Institute of Theology Annex Building.
2. Money to expand the Maternity Ward at KBC Clinic. Expected cost is \$35,000.
3. \$1,900 to support Saw Winber, a Karen from Mae La Camp, to study at Oriental Theological Seminary, India. (\$1,300 has already been raised plus a gift of a \$600 computer).
4. \$1,200 each to three free clinics for medicine for the poor (\$100 a month).
5. Emergency orphan support for Nargis victims at three orphanages.

Thank you for your support!

Financial Statement: FOB received \$1,134.017.63 in 2009 and disbursed for charitable purposes \$1,053,638.82. Expenses were \$4,123.46 or .0036%. That's 36 cents on every hundred dollars taken in. Actually 100% of each donation goes to help the Burmese because the overhead is covered by one person's designated donation. FOB, because it has a license to send money to Burma, enables the transfer of money from other organizations to Burma. We do this if the program and objectives of these fraternal organizations are in line with our mission statement. The largest of these "wash throughs" is related to Bible translations and printing. However these transfers do inflate our totals and constitute over half of the totals. When looking at these large figures, it is important not to lose sight of the fact they are made up of thousands of small donations. Each of these small donations has a very important effect on an individual whether it be a pair of glasses, aid to a retired worker, loan for a microcredit enterprise of a desperate woman, or support of an orphan.



Vacation Bible School – craft time, Henthada, Eunice Thetgyi's project

Friends of Burma is a 501(c)(3) organization. "All donations are tax deductible." All work in the U.S is done by volunteers.

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