

Dated: Monday, May 26, 2008

Hi All,

Let me try to do this in one letter here. I left Yangon on the 12th so this information is based on my experience to-date and hopefully with these new UN discussion the doors have opened up more and things are changing quickly with aid distribution. Anyhow, please note the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok caught fire yesterday, the visa section is now closed, but that doesn't affect me b/c I have a 6 month multi-entry visa but it does affect the aid workers who have been waiting here for weeks.

Many donors drop off their goods in Yangon to Sayadaw's Sitagu International Buddhist Missionary Center. They not only donate supplies for the refugees, but trucks for transport, petrol and supplies for the support teams. All goods are consolidated and sent out on one of the daily convoys (anywhere b/w 10-20) trucks to Bogalay Township, 100 miles away and by convoy it takes at least 6 hours. On the outskirts of Bogalay Township, Sayadaw has an old-aged home and a monastery under the umbrella of his Sitagu organization. The old-aged home has been turned into an emergency medical clinic seeing over 200 patients/day. The Kwanthe (I know my spelling is a little off) Monastery on the other side of the river is now a center for over 900 refugees. The area around and the dock has been turned into a staging ground for distribution where goods are then sent off by boats. When you look at a map of the delta it looks like a hand w/fingers, the fingers being rivers. All of these rivers are connected by smaller rivers and canals, so there are many small islands, and this area is accessible primarily by boat. Road infrastructure is 50 years old at best and crumbling.

Now over 200 monasteries (200+villages) and over 100,000 people have received his assistance. The monasteries are the center of each village and now Sitagu Sayadaw has personally donated money to each monastery which totals nearly USD \$20,000 b/c they had no financial means whatsoever after they cyclone and with money they are empowered to buy what they want as well. Over 100 tons of rice have been supplied and I've lost count on the truck loads of mosquito nets, dried fish, canned goods, fresh vegetables, clothing, slippers, 60K+ blankets, towels, plastic sheets, noodles, biscuits and building materials... sent to these villages.

He has his personal medical superintendent and a team of 11 doctors from his Ayudana Hospital working with teams from Asia Royal Hospital (a privately owned hospital from Yangon). They have set-up 5 emergency medical clinics in: Bogalay, Kwan Thee old age home in Bogalay Township, Ahma Village, Kadongkanee Village and Setsan Village. Each clinic sees over 200 patients per day. I can't begin to describe the suffering.

These however are short term solutions and Sayadaw has a bigger vision:

1. Rebuild and supply at least 3-4 hospitals with updated medical equipment.
2. Rebuild the monasteries which are the heart of the villages

3. Rebuild the primary schools b/c without an education you have nothing, you're stuck in life.

I hope this gives you a better overview. Sayadaw is now in Singapore and has begun to purchase necessary medical equipment. Water purification units are being built and transported from Thailand. 100 5kva generators are being purchased for the small villages b/c all infrastructure is down and they estimate 6 months to a year before electricity is restored. 3-4 60kva generators are being purchased for the hospitals. He's in desperate need of galvanized steel roof sheets , at least 50,000 pieces.

Oh you may ask how can, "how is he able to do all this?, how do the goods get through?" He's always been a great humanitarian and I say the "leading visionary of Myanmar". The word "Sitagu" no one questions so his trucks drive through without problems. This is also about working together with all parties for the benefit of those suffering.

All of this takes money! That's why me, along with U Ariyadhamma and others are campaigning hard to raise donations. I, though, saw with my own baby blues, the tremendous suffering, and the tremendous merit that is happening. I can't wait to get back today and will be thrilled if you all can join our Sitagu fundraising team as well.

Please look at www.flickr.com search word "sitagu" for photos. Here are a couple more that haven't been distributed.

Best,
Jennifer