

“You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” - Amy Carmichael

Fall 2020

Greetings

Greetings and welcome to the Fall 2020 edition of our newsletter. I had hoped to be able to report that the COVID nightmare was behind us and life was getting back to normal but, apparently, not yet.

The world still seems to be operating in chaos mode, with uncertainty being the key word for the world’s finances, politics, and health. America might have a new president by the time you read this, and Myanmar, too, depending on when they hold their elections. Then again, with all the questions surrounding elections in both countries, we may not know for a while who the winners and losers will be.

What we do know is that God has not changed. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is still King of all Creation and, in the end, He and the Father will have their way. Wrongs will be righted, hurts will be healed, and tears will be wiped away. It reminds me of the prophesy of Aslan from the classic Chronicles of Narnia:

“Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,

At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,

When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,

And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.”



COVID-19 Hunger Relief

A second lockdown was ordered by the central government for all of Myanmar. This is causing great problems for the poor.

People in the villages cannot go out for work and, as day laborers, if they do not work they cannot buy food. There are no government food programs, no community food banks, no unemployment insurance, no CARES Act, etc. In short, the people are left to fend for themselves, but if they try to go out to work, they can be arrested.

Poor people in the cities are not faring any better. A story recently came out from Reuters titled **“Eating rats: Myanmar’s second lockdown drives hunger in city slums”** (<https://ca.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-myanmar-slums->

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[idCAKBN27818P](https://ca.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-myanmar-slums-)). It tells the story of 36 year old Ma Suu, who was forced to close her stall by the lockdown order.

“During the second wave, when the government issued a stay-home order in September for Yangon, Ma Suu shut her stall again and sold her clothes, plates and pots.

With nothing left to sell, her husband, an out of work construction labourer, has resorted to hunting for food in the



Some family members from Hlaingtaya Christian Church receiving their food aid

open drains by the slum where they live on the outskirts of Myanmar's largest city.

"People are eating rats and snakes," Ma Suu said through tears. "Without an income, they need to eat like that to feed their children."

They live in Hlaingtaya Township, the same area of Yangon where one of our little congregations is located, Hlaingtaya Christian Church. Our people there are suffering the same situation.

Up in the villages, people sneak out and go into the forests to try to find roots and tubers that they can bring home to eat. If someone is caught outside their village breaking curfew, they can be arrested and put in jail.



Families from villages in Layshay Township gathered (with permission from local leaders) in a central location to receive much-needed rice.

We praise God that He has put it on the hearts of His people to donate even in times of financial uncertainty. Because of your generous donations, we were able to send additional funds this month to provide emergency food aid to many more people, up in the Homalin area, the Tamu area, and in Hlaingtaya in Yangon.

Of course, none of this would be possible without your very generous donations! The people are still very hungry and are still suffering greatly under the COVID lockdowns. Will you please share this need with your friends and family, and also consider making a donation today? \$30.00 will purchase one large



Rice provided by your donations. More is needed!
bag of rice (100lbs).

Thank you and God bless you!



Families from Hlaingtaya Township

daughter. Despite the hardships of her life, she poured herself into the children under her care. Her love and devotion to every one of the 256 children that she taught over the years was evident to all.



Miss Ngaih Kim, Miss Lucy, Miss Khan Chin

Even after the children left her care at the preschool, she followed their lives throughout grade school. She was able to report to us their ongoing progress, stating proudly that her children were achieving high marks and in many cases were first in their class.

We are greatly saddened by her passing, but we take comfort in knowing that she is now pain-free and living in the presence of the Lord.

We are so thankful for the loving leadership that she displayed and modeled for the staff and children at Hope Preschool. Our two junior teachers, Miss Lucy and Miss Vei Nei Lam, will attempt

Hope Preschool

Hope Preschool in Tamu continues to operate in a restricted capacity because of the pandemic.

Unfortunately, we were dealt a heavy blow in the last week of September. Our preschool teacher, Miss Ngaih Kim, who has been with us since the very beginning of the school in 2010, died unexpectedly of a brain tumor. She checked into the Tamu hospital because of an intense and persistent headache, and she died there in the hospital.

We were devastated by the news. Ngaih Kim was a young widow with one



Teachers and some of the students from our current preschool class



Teachers and Inspectors at Hope Preschool

to fill her shoes going forward.

We may have mentioned in the last newsletter that our preschool was recently audited by the local authorities. They were happy with all that they reviewed, with one exception. They said we did not have enough space for the number of students we had enrolled (at that time, thirty-nine). They said the maximum number we could have at our location was twenty-four children!



In loving memory of Ngaih Kim, may she rest in peace

This is another huge blow for us, but we knew that we were very short on space. Now the elders and the teachers will have to decide who can attend and who cannot. It is a hard decision.

Going forward, we want to purchase land and construct a new preschool building. It should have enough space for many more children to learn and play. We continue to believe that a good education is the most effective means

for lifting people out of the chains of extreme poverty. The preschool is vital for giving our children a good start on a good education. As the saying goes, “well begun is half done” and we have witnessed the truth of this over and over again in the lives of many students.

Please pray for our preschool teachers, our helpers, and the students as they grieve the loss of Miss Ngaih Kim. And please pray for our plans for new land and buildings. Humanly speaking, this is an impossible dream. But we know that with God all things are possible, and we have seen Him work miracles in many ways and at many times. We trust that He will continue to work miracles on behalf of the poor and needy in northwest Myanmar.

Will you pray to be a part of that next miracle? Thank you, and God bless you!

New Hope Prison Outreach

We are happy to report that the New Hope Prison Outreach finally has furniture!

Thanks mainly to the very generous donations from several of our many friends, we were able to purchase handmade hardwood furniture from a carpenter in Kalaymyo.

We were able to purchase two hardwood (teak) beds and one hardwood double bed. Now the guests have beds to sleep on, instead of the hard concrete or wood floor. (The double bed is actually about the size of a king bed in US sizes.) We also purchased a new table, chairs, and bench chairs for the main room, and a table with six chairs for the



Pastor Sei Lal and family trying out the new furniture



New beds for the NHPO Guest House

dining room. All of the furniture is very well built from teak hardwood and will last for generations!



New dining room table and chairs

Prison Outreach Updates

The COVID lockdowns have not prevented Pastor Sei Lal from working on behalf of prisoners and their families. During the lockdown periods, he was restricted to meeting with prisoners once every two weeks, and then only one at a time. He met with 53 inmates during the first lockdown, praying with them and for them, and encouraging them from the Word of God.

He was also able to make contact with 321 families from March through the end of August. 79 family members stopped at the guest house during this time, and 13 stayed overnight. Also, during this time he was able to deliver



Pastor Sei Lal delivering books to the prisoners

money and food to 20 inmates from their families.

In August, Pastor Sei Lal received a permit from the prison officials to hand-deliver over 300 copies of Christian books to inmates. They were extremely happy to receive the books, as there is nothing like that for them at the prison.

Thank you, everyone, for your continued prayers and financial love gifts in support of the New Hope Prison Outreach! You are proving your love of God by “remembering those in prison, as though in prison with them.”

— Hebrews 13:3

East/West Garden Project Update

One of the main purposes of the East/West Garden project is to act as a model farm and to provide agricultural training and support for the many small farming families in the surrounding region. While working out this purpose, we provide full-time employment and housing to several families who live and work on the farm, as well as part-time and seasonal employment to many.

In the last edition of our newsletter we reported on several training and discussion sessions that Dr. Nehkholal held with local leaders of the farming community. One outcome of those sessions was a new project proposal, designed to help even more small family

farms in northern Chin State and southern Sagaing Region, where many of our people live and work.

We are reproducing that project proposal here, in hopes that someone reading this may be interested in helping, and/or who may know others who would also be able and willing to help get this new project funded and off to a good start.

Elephant Foot Yam Farming in Myanmar: A Project Proposal

1. Introduction

The “elephant foot yam,” (scientific name *amorphophallus paeoniifolius*) is a tropical tuber crop grown primarily in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the tropical Pacific islands. Because of its popularity as a vegetable in various cuisines, as well as its valuable medicinal properties, it is highly sought after in the forests and jungles by remote villagers. It is also raised as a cash crop in more populated areas.



Mature Elephant Foot Yam Tuber

2. The Elephant Foot Yam in Northwest Myanmar (Lower Sagaing Region and Upper Chin State)

The yams grow quite well in northwest Myanmar, but because of poverty and lack of education, the local villagers do not know how to profit from growing them. Poor villagers go out into the forests to hunt for wild yams. On a good day, one or two large tubers will be found. These can then be sold in the markets for cash. Most days, however, the yam hunters return home empty-handed. The yams sold in the market are purchased by businesspeople who



Sagaing Region



Chin State

export them to China or Japan, where they are greatly valued both as food and as raw material for medicines and cosmetics.

3. Growing the Yams as a Cash Crop

Southern Chin State has received much attention from large international NGOs and development agencies, more so than the remote areas in lower Sagaing Region and upper Chin State where Myanmar Hope primarily works.

One example of that attention is a project under development by UK Aid in cooperation with the Myanmar Ministry of Agriculture and the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producer and Exporter Association.

This multi-year, multi-million-dollar project consists of farms and production facilities supporting the growing of coffee, avocados, and elephant foot yams. One major farm in this cooperative effort is called the Elephant Foot Yam Plantation (EFYP).

The plantation was first started in southern Chin State and has now expanded into one of the most productive farms in the area. Some local farmers, living in conditions of extreme poverty, have seen their incomes increase by up to 300 percent by working with the EFYP. Whereas their daily income averaged less than one dollar per day, now many of them are receiving incomes of up to three dollars per day!



Food dish from Elephant Yam

4. A New Factory in Chin State

To support the new emphasis on elephant foot yam farming, a new processing factory in southern Chin State was opened on January 26, 2020.

This factory, supported by the surrounding plantation and area farms, will initially process about twelve tons of yams per day. Their plan is to continue development of the area farms in order to achieve a production and processing goal of five-hundred tons per day. These new developments have instilled great hope in the local farmers that finally they will be able to raise their standard of living and escape the chains of extreme poverty.



Elephant foot yam farmers in India

5. Yam Farming in Sagaing Region

Elephant foot yam farming is still in its infancy in upper Chin State and lower Sagaing Region. The previously mentioned development initiatives by international NGOs and government agencies have not yet made their way north and, therefore, the local farmers are still largely ignorant of the great production potential of yam farming. Those who are aware of the potential do not have the resources or technical training to begin farming the yams.

The purpose of this proposal is to obtain initial grant funding in order to

bring the benefits of elephant yam farming to as many families in lower Sagaing Region and upper Chin state who still live in conditions of extreme poverty and who sincerely desire to begin yam farming.

5. Cost (per acre for three years)

The estimated costs to clear, prepare, plant, cultivate, and harvest one acre of yams is \$2,100 for three years (see Attachment A for more details). Yams grow best when planted two feet apart with three feet between rows, and this works out to 7,260 plants per acre. Each plant produces one yam.

In the first year the tubers are too small to sell in the marketplace. In the second year the tubers are somewhat larger and could be sold, but they would not bring enough profit to be worth the effort and costs of harvesting and transport. However, in year three, the yams are fully grown, and a good harvest will result in a great return on investment.

6. Income (per acre for three years)

The estimated yield for one acre of land is 7,260 yams or tubers. Each third-year tuber should weigh on average approximately one viss (1.6kg) each, and the current price per viss is \$0.83. This yields a gross income of \$6,025.80.

Net income for three years should be \$3,925.80, or \$1,308.60 annually. Considering that the average family farm, in a good year, will barely yield a few hundred dollars annually, yam farming would represent a significant increase in the standard of living for small farmers in the region.

Average daily income could rise from less than one dollar per day to three dollars per day or more. This would go a long way toward lifting these families out of extreme poverty, giving them the ability to provide better nutrition for their families, better educations for their children, and increased access to



Bulbilts from a mature plant

technologies for improving their lives, such as solar and traditional electricity, water pumps for clean water and irrigation systems, and more.

[Please see the chart on the next page for a detailed breakdown of income and expenses.]

6. Planting

Elephant foot yams can be planted using either tubers or bulbilts from existing plants. Most experienced farmers prefer to use bulbilts rather than tubers to plant new yams.

A mature plant can produce as many as twenty good bulbilts, and these are used to establish the plantings for the next three-year cycle and also to sell to other farmers. Land must be cleared of trees and brush in January and February. Planting of the yams usually begins in late March and April. The plants are tended during the first three years, and then harvested in October of the third year.



Mature elephant yam plant

7. Markets

Traditionally farmers have sold their yams to local agents, who collect the yams from the local villages and then transport them to Mandalay for sale to Chinese and Japanese dealers. However, now that a new yam processing factory has been established in Chin State, farmers will be able to sell directly to the factory and get a better price for their yields.

8. Conclusion

Local villagers have plenty of land in their region, but they still live under extreme poverty because of their lack of education, inadequate technical skills, and no financial resources.

These families need help to liberate themselves from the chains of poverty in order to have enough income for their lives and hope for their futures. Myanmar Hope is seeking grant funding to establish yam farming on as many acres as possible at a rate of \$2,100 per acre. Thank you for your kind consideration of this proposal.

**Dr. Nehkholal (Palal) Khongsai
North Dagon, Yangon, Myanmar**

[End of Project Proposal]

If you are interested in helping the Christian farmers in northwest Myanmar attain financial independence and reduce their dependence on Western aid, the above project is a great way to do just that. Also, if you know anyone who is interested in agricultural missions and would like to partner with the farmers in upper Chin State and lower Sagaing Region for yam farming, please pass this information on to them.

Please make a donation at our website, myanmarhope.org/donate, or contact us at info@myanmarhope.org for more information.

Thank you and God bless you!

Attachment A

Elephant Foot Yam Plantation Project

Three Year Cost Details – October 2020 through October 2023 – per Acre

Description	Amount	Notes
Land Selection	N/A	Oct-Nov 2020
Land Preparation	\$150	Jan 2021
Purchase/transport bulbs	\$750	Jan-Feb 2021
Planting (labor)	\$150	March-May 2021
First Weeding (labor)	\$100	June 2021
Second Weeding (labor)	\$100	August 2021
Third Weeding and Plant Drying (labor)	\$100	October 2021
First Year Total Costs	\$1,350	
Second Year Weeding	\$300	Jun-Aug-Oct 2022
Third Year Weeding	\$300	Jun-Aug-Oct 2023
Third Year Harvesting	\$150	October 2023
Total costs over three years	\$2,100	

Calculation for Three Years for One Acre

Total Income	\$6,025.00
Less Total Costs	<u>\$2,100.00</u>
Balance	<u>\$3,925.80</u>

Per-year income \$1,308.60 (average per acre per year)

Costs and Planting/Cultivation/Harvest Schedule for an Elephant Foot Yam Farm

Hope Boarding School Update

In the ten years that we have been in operation, one hundred five (105) children from very poor families in north-west Myanmar have had their lives changed through Hope Boarding School!

Of those, thirty-six (36) students graduated from high school, and some of them are still in their respective grades. Sixteen (16) students are now studying at Dagon University and Kalay University. We have students studying for degrees in Law, Biochemistry, English, Nursing, History, and more. These students are so blessed and they have

great hopes for their future! Praise God!

Some of our former students have jobs in different towns in Myanmar and some of them are working in Singapore, China, and Malaysia. They have income for their living, and some of them are able to send money to their families back in their home villages.

A few of our former students have married and now have children of their own. While at HBS they learned many valuable life skills that are helping them now. They also learned the Bible and Christianity at HBS. They are a light for their neighbors, their churches, and their communities.



HBS students studying the Bible under Dr. Nehkholal

Restrictions have Affected Our Students

In May, most of our students who had previously gone back to their villages for break in early March were not able to return to Yangon because of the travel restrictions. Only a few were able to travel before the restrictions were fully in place. So now we have only twenty-six students at HBS. Usually there are around fifty students.

Schools Remain Closed but Learning Goes On!

Normally, the school session begins in June, but this year the public schools did not open until July 21st. First, only the high school was opened for 9th and 10th graders. The lower grades were instructed to wait for the government to announce when their classes would open.

Then, due to the increased number of the covid-positive cases in our country, all the schools were closed again on August 26th.

Even though the schools were closed indefinitely, our remaining students could not go back to their villages. The highways remain closed and there is no public transportation to the northwest from Yangon.

Now, twenty-six students are staying with us in Yangon. Even though the public schools are still closed, the HBS staff and I are teaching the children Bible and school subjects every day. They love taking their classes from our staff and they love learning the Bible from me.

We are so thankful to all of the sponsors who are faithfully praying and supporting our HBS students. We are also sending food to the needy students and their families who are still waiting in the northwest.

I would like to encourage you with a Bible verse from the book of Proverbs. It says:

"If you help the poor, you are lending to the LORD—and he will repay you!"

Proverbs 19.17 (NLT)

I strongly believe that the Lord will surely repay you, just as He promised, as you help many poor students and orphans at Hope Boarding School! Please continue praying and helping our HBS students. Thank you!

In His Ministry
Palal Khongsai

Village Christmas Meals

As you prepare for the holidays, are you thinking about how you can bless the poor this Christmas? We have a program called "Village Christmas Meals" that provides a very tangible blessing each year for many people living in extreme poverty.



There are families living in rural Myanmar who are too poor to afford meat with their meals. These families live on less than a dollar a day, which is barely enough income to provide rice and vegetables. Meat is a luxury they simply cannot afford. However, there is one time of year when these families look forward to eating meat: at Christmas.

The church or the village will pool their resources to purchase a pig or a cow, and they will all come together on Christmas Eve for a community meal.



They will sing, dance, play games, and listen to preaching all night long. On Christmas Day it will be more of the same. They will eat together until the food runs out. Unfortunately, there are families that are too poor to contribute anything towards the food, and then they feel too ashamed to join in the meal.

We think everyone should be able to partake, regardless of whether they have anything to contribute. That's why we began the "Village Christmas Meals" project to help provide the meat for their meals. That way, everyone can participate without feeling ashamed because of their extreme poverty.

Thanks to you, since 2007 dozens of villages and churches have been provided with meat at Christmastime. **Last year (2019) your donations helped feed ninety (90) different villages and/or churches!**

This year we hope to provide meat for at least that many, but wouldn't it be wonderful if we could help even more? Would you please help us reach this goal? **To provide the meat for an entire Village Christmas Meal is only \$250, but anything you can afford is great.**

Each year the people who receive this help are so incredibly thankful. They are



A family in Cheti Village enjoying a Christmas meal

"You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."
- Amy Carmichael



MyHope Newsletter

Fall 2020

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1104 206th St E
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amazed that people like you know about them and that you love them enough to share your blessings with them. And when we share our blessings with the poor it makes our own Christmas that much better!

Will you please help a poor village or church in rural Myanmar this Christmas? And will you share this request with your friends, relatives, small group members, Sunday School class members, and anyone else you can think of? Please send a check to our address below, or give online at our secure donation page:

<https://myanmarhope.org/donate>

Do you have Questions? Call Kevin Hughs at (217) 306-5567 or MaryAnn Cherry at (217) 415-9187, or send us an email at info@myanmarhope.org.

Thank you, and God bless you!



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