



Whisperings from the Seed

from little things...

big things grow!!!

Thoughts from jim May 2014

Dear Friends and Family,

It is hard to believe, but we have spent a year in Myanmar now. Everything is different in Myanmar and life maintains its own unique rhythm which we are still growing accustomed to.

Our home in Pyin Oo Lwin is now being sold and we are in the process of considering a move to Kalaw, another small hill-station in southern Shan State near Inle Lake in order to find land and set up the Sprouting Seeds Learning Centre with Bakery, Café and Eco-shop Training Centre. We hope you enjoy sharing in some of our news!!

-jim & the kids



Global Giving Open Challenge a Huge Success!!!!

Thank you to all those that supported our Global Giving Open Challenge in December, where we reached \$7,345 and over 87 donors. Thank you for all your support!! We have already completed several teacher training programs and have more over the next few months. Because of the success and need for more trainings, we have increased our funding \$9,000 and still need your support.

We have also started a second campaign, **SPROUTING SEEDS LEARNING CENTRE**, a café, bakery, eco-shop and training centre for primarily young girls from remote and ethnic background of Myanmar to receive training and life skills development. Aye AUng will be helping to run the new training centre which we hope to open in Kalaw, Southern Shan State.

<http://globalgiving.org/projects/sprouting-seeds-learning-centre> . Please see link and details below to support our new projects!!!

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New Earthen Schools & Classrooms for Kachin Communities in Northern Shan State

Working with a local NGO based in Yangon, we have been supporting several Kachin communities in Northern Shan State with trainings in earthen buildings. Ongoing government offensives in these regions have recently created over 100,000 IDP's (Internally Displaced People), leaving these poor communities struggling to survive and support the IDP's in very challenging circumstances.



The IDP camps, similar to refugee camps, but within Myanmar, house mostly women and children in simple bamboo houses, which are often overcrowded and the people, because they have fled from conflict zones, have little access to basic food, shelter, and healthcare. In February, WS trained over 60 participants from 13 communities from all over northern Shan State near the Chinese border. Each of the 13 communities needs classrooms and schools for their growing populations, many of the children coming from within the IDP camps. We taught brick making during the first workshop and then the community members make over 10,000 bricks. In May, our friend Dan Lockwood from Dragonfly Community Foundation Thailand joined us to start the first classroom. After just a few days, the first buildings was done and over the next few weeks, the community built the second class by themselves.



In May, I returned to teach final plaster and painting with tapioca and lime. The roof was completed and the painting finished. The community is now putting the final touches on the building in order to open to the students on June 1st.

This school will need another 5 classrooms next year to serve the children coming from the IDP camp and surrounding villages. Also, another 13 schools scattered all over northern Shan State in Kachin areas are also in need of new schools and classrooms. We are in the process of planning trainings to start working on some of these classrooms in October-November once the monsoon season has passed. We are excited at the enthusiasm and energy we received through our trainings and interest in all of these communities to start building with mud. It is a big project ahead, but we look forward to support these Kachin communities to gain the necessary skills so they can become self-reliant, building their own schools, classrooms and homes in a sustainable and cost effective manner.



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Kachin Baptists join with Buddhist Monks from Monastic schools to build the classrooms

with teachers, students and community members in Northern Shan State



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Advanced Teacher Training of Trainers

Together with Spirit in Education Movement, Socially Engaged Monastic Schools and Center for the Promotion of Monastic Education, WS assisted in facilitating an advanced Training of Trainers. The training was held in the Pa-O region near Taunggyi, in Southern Shan State.



20 teachers from all over Myanmar were gathered for the training to learn new schools to now improve their basic teaching skills but also to become trainers who will now be able to go out and train new young teachers across Myanmar.

The training included training in personal development, life skills training, exposure visits to local projects and sites in around Shan State, including a visit to Inle Lake to meet with other teachers who are also working as community leaders.

The training was a great success and partnership with many organizations. We look forward to many more trainings to support teachers to better enhance the quality of life for the poor and marginalized children of Myanmar.



We look forward to sharing more new from our upcoming trainings!!!!

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Senior Myanmar Abbot Exposure in Laos & Thailand



In December, with support of Spirit in Education Movement and American Friends Service Committee and with Center for Promotion of Monastic Education, we assisted in facilitating another Exposure Visit for Senior Abbots from Myanmar to travel To Laos & Thailand to learn about socially engaged Buddhism, holistic Education and Sustainability. This Is a unique Opportunity for The abbots and nuns To see directly in Action a variety of social work and community Development projects. After studying and learning about how to apply in the community, exposure visits allow them how to see how the principles they learn can be directly applied.



Friends from Afar come to visit Whispering Seed in Myanmar



During the last year, we have been fortunate to have several friends come to visit us here in Pyin Oo Lwin. With things opening more and more in the country, it is now easier for people to come and visit with us and stay. As we are getting more established here in Myanmar and starting the Sprouting Seeds Learning Centre, we are looking forward to more friends and family being able to join us during the upcoming year. Much help will be needed as we get things started with Sprouting Seeds!!!



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Shanan Education Network Summer Teacher Training

In April and May we worked with St Matthews Orphanage Center here in Pyin Oo Lwin and their Shanan Education Network, a Kachin education group to help provide teacher training. The teachers come from all over Shan and Kachin States and work mostly in extremely remote areas. We supported trainings both here in Pyin Oo Lwin and one group in Myitkyina, in Kachin State.
(More details to come in following reports!!)

Continued Earthen Buildings for Kachin in Northern Shan State

In April and May we continued our work helping to build Earthen classrooms and schools in northern Shan State with the Kachin communities. We taught the first training for over 60 participants from 13 communities from all over northern Shan State. The group then built the second classroom by themselves!!! In May I went to teach finishing plaster and painting so they can use the buildings when school starts June 1st. We will support several new earthen schools in the border near China starting after the rains in October-November.

Whispering Seed Upcoming Projects

Naung Taung Monastery Community Leadership Training for Pa-O Communities

At the end of March, we travelled to Southern Shan State to offer support training to Naung Taung Monastery for their Community Leadership Training. We supported with several days training introducing in Holistic Education, Practical Life Skills and Introduction to Sustainability. We are excited to continue our work and support for the monastery and their surrounding communities.
(more details and photos in upcoming reports!)

Holistic Education Teacher Training Materials

Whispering Seed is also partnering with several other education organizations here in Myanmar to work on the document, translation and printing of further reading materials and documentary films focused on Holistic Education and Sustainability. These materials will be used throughout the country for various groups to use during their teacher training as support for the trainings. So far, there are plans for translation into Burmese and Kachin languages.

Fundraiser Dinners in Philadelphia



Our dear friends Jean and Steve Ettinger have been supporting Whispering Seed and the people of Myanmar through banquet dinners held in our home city of Philadelphia. The first dinner was a huge success. Following this, Jean & Steve traveled

to Myanmar and stopped in to visit the children here at Whispering Seed with their group, Road Scholars.

They were moved by the people, cultures and land in Myanmar and held another dinner on March 26th to support the people of Myanmar.

Earthen Building Networking in Myanmar

As part of our earthen buildings trainings with the Kachin communities in Northern Shan State, we are also working to support and work with the network of earthen building trainers here in Myanmar.

Throughout the next few months, we will be continuing our work along the China border with the Kachin people, but also working with at least one of the Buddhist monastic schools in that region to build more much needed classrooms.

We will use these trainings as a time to teach finishing skills, plastering, painting and design work for the network of earthen buildings here in Myanmar. We will also use this as a time to bring inter-faith groups together to work hand in hand while learning these practical skills.

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Sprouting Seeds Learning Centre: Vegetarian Cafe ~ Bakery ~ Eco-shop & Training Centre

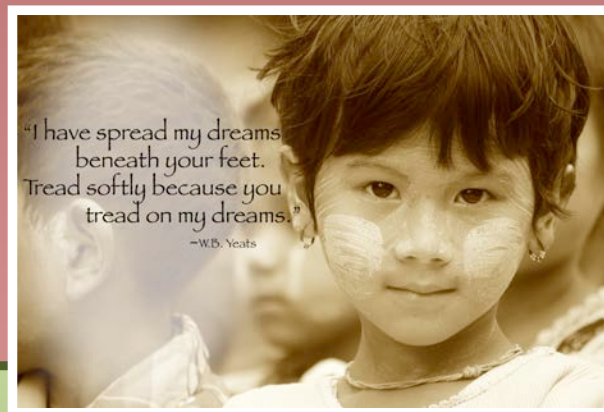
We need your support to help start Sprouting Seeds Learning Centre our newest project. This Café, Bakery & Eco-Shop will be used as a Training Centre for youth, primarily from remote regions and ethnic backgrounds from around Myanmar, to learn a variety of skills and capacity building. We are raising funds through Global Giving to get this project up and running and need your support!

Aye Aung, our eldest girl, will be helping to initiate and run the project, working with other local youth from the area. We are in the process of finding a suitable location in Kalaw, a small former British hill station in Southern Shan State near Inle Lake. We need your support to help make this project a reality! We will be working with many partner groups in Myanmar and participants will join the centre from our network of Monastic schools and other groups we are working with in remote regions of the country through our Teacher Training Programs. Donations and more information can be found at:

<http://globalgiving.org/projects/sprouting-seeds-learning-centre>

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

- Financial Support through Global Giving and our website
- Logos for Whispering Seed and Sprouting Seeds Learning Centre and the products we will be developing
- Development of Training Centre in Kalaw



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