

Buddhist Federation of Australia Myanmar fundraising event

Mr Henry Dang, Secretary of the Buddhist Federation of Australia, invited Colin and Susan Butler to a fundraising event in Sydney in June to benefit victims of Cyclone Nargis, which struck Myanmar 3 May, 2008.

Key organisers were Ven. Sudhammo, Ven. Kaset, Ven. Satit, Ven. Phuoc Dat, Ven. U Nandiya, Mr Atorn, Mr Lam Mo, Ms Narumol, Ms Vannee and Hannah and Henry Dang. There were many other volunteers.

The event was extremely well attended, the auction very popular and the evening a great success.

So far A\$36,000 has been raised through the efforts of the Buddhist Federation of Australia to help cyclone victims. Ven Sudhammo and other Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists went to affected areas to give money, food and other life-saving materials to the victims.

Prayer for the People of Myanmar

Following is a prayer that Colin wrote at the 6th United Nations Day of Vesak in Hanoi in May. The Pali at the end is from the Ven Dhammasami, a Burmese monk now based in Oxford, England.



Colin at Nargis fundraising event, Sydney, June 2008

We would like to ask you to observe a minute of silence and to pray for the people of Myanmar, who have been greatly harmed by Cyclone Nargis, which struck its central coast last week on Saturday, May 3. This was the first big storm to strike Myanmar for many years, and by far the most deadly. Accompanied by a powerful and destructive storm surge the cyclone may have already caused the death of over 100,000 people. In addition, one and a half million people have been displaced. They are in urgent need of aid. The storm has destroyed much of the rice crop in the fertile Irrawaddy basin. It has also destroyed countless numbers of cows, buffalo, houses, boats and roads.

Vietnam also has a long and fertile coastline, and is subject to a far larger number of storms and flooding. Both countries are also bonded by their Buddhist faith. We ask you to pray for the people of Burma, both living and dead. They have lost so much and in are such grief and pain. We also pray for the monks and nuns in Myanmar, as they strive to bring relief to their people.

dukkha-patta ca nidukkha
bhaya-patta ca nibbhaya
soka-patta ca nissoka
hontu sabbe pi panino

Translation:

May those who suffer from Nargis Cyclone overcome suffering;
May those living in physical and psychological fear overcome fear;
May they overcome anxiety and worry; and find solace and peace in the dharma.



BPF delegation with head monk, Rangoon Division, 2008

Photos courtesy Jill Jameson

BPF delegates visiting monastery, 2008

Community in Victoria works for Nargis victims

While the Buddhist Federation of Australia staged the Sydney event for victims of Cyclone Nargis described above, Jill Jameson shows what one community can do as she recalls the efforts of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF) in Victoria.

‘Last Saturday night we had a really amazing fund-raising concert for Burma in our community – the initiative of Kavisha Mazzella!. Kavisha, whose mother is from Burma and is a well known and sensitive singer and musician, found the BPF list of projects on the Australia-Burma Network website, and phoned to offer doing a benefit concert for Burma. She has performed for many refugee events etc, so her words were especially meaningful. Her group was also joined by a Karen singer and player of the Burmese harp and guitar, who touched everyone’s hearts so profoundly, both by his story of great loss of family in the cyclone Nargis, and by his beautiful smile. He participates in workshops I have been facilitating at Foundation for Survivors of Torture on working with conflict and strengthening community.

‘The concert and other events around Burma have had a ripple effect of generosity in our community. The concert raised \$10,000; 250 primary school children in Warrandyte have illustrated a large Book of Hope to be sent to Burma, and such actions are helping the grieving people from Burma here in Melbourne, knowing people care. BPF also had a further \$3,000 from donations over the year. This includes \$500 from the Clifton Hill Zendo, \$300 from Rigpa Fellowship and \$1,000 from BPF in Sydney

‘We have sent funds firstly through the Australia Burma Community Development Network for relief work (\$4,000 so far), including through two senior monks who are working through the monastic system to deliver relief. We are also supporting the work of Paung Daw Oo Monastery - both in their relief work with orphans, and the longer term school project, (\$5,000). A friend at the concert last night, and who together with her husband had set up the Asia Peace and Education Foundation (for Burma), is going to Burma in 2 weeks to take funds directly to the Monastery, as well as the Book of Hope.’

Other Buddhist Peace Fellowship activities

Jill Jameson says: ‘BPF has also funded the printing of a Karen herbal medicine booklet for distribution in the camps and through back - packer medics (about \$1,500). This project came about through Jenny Adams and is in conjunction with a local Karen organization, KESAN (Karen Environment and Social Action Network) on the Thai Burma border at Mae Sot. The booklet is in Karen with descriptions of plants and pictures and information on family health care, and offers healing potential in a situation of dislocation and loss for refugees and displaced peoples, where traditional medicine can provide “a thin thread of continuity”, as well as being medicine for a wide range of basic health problems.’