

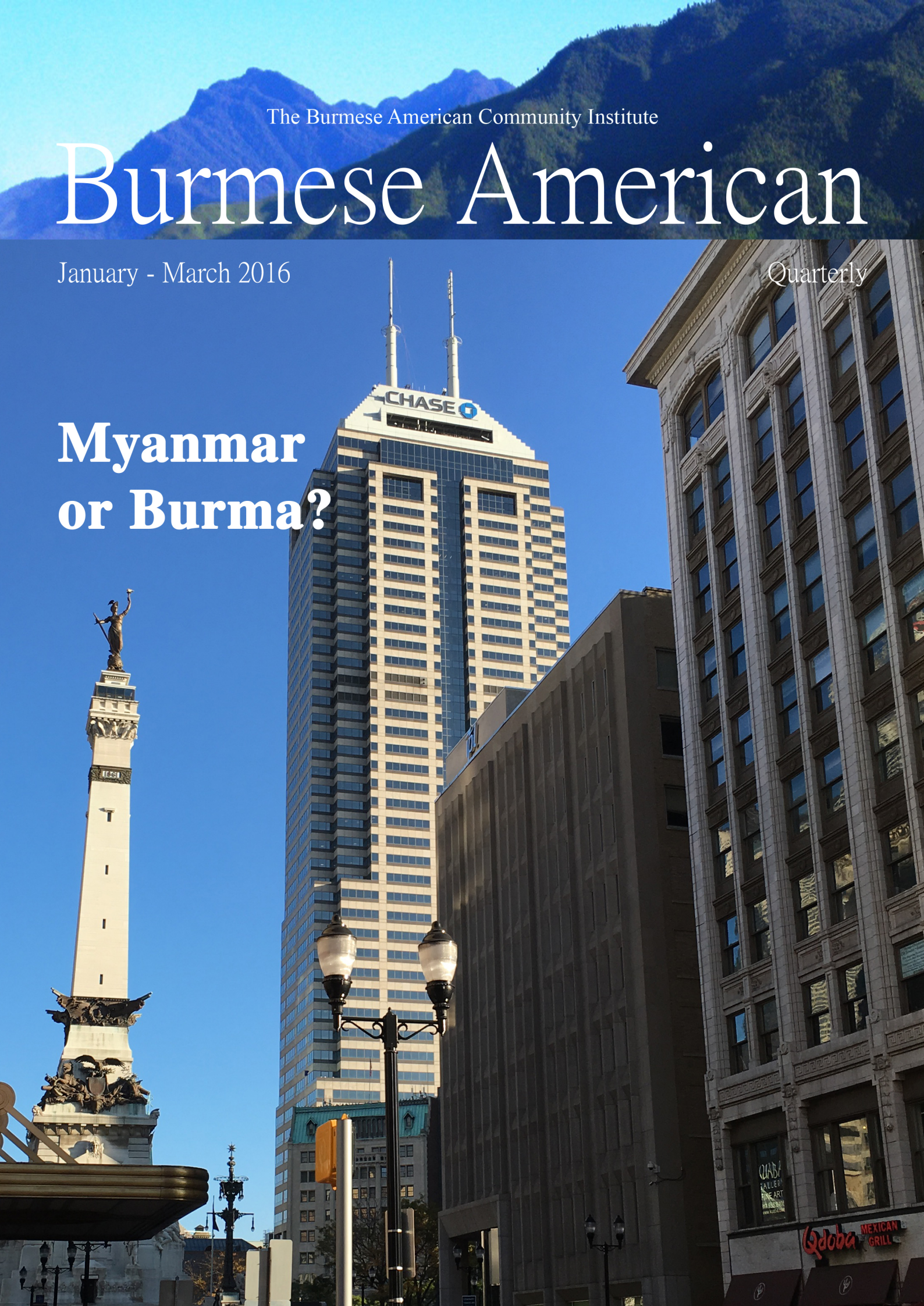
The Burmese American Community Institute

Burmese American

January - March 2016

Quarterly

Myanmar or Burma?



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Advocacy and Service Outcomes

1019 total persons directly assisted during 2015

69 students assisted through UCP during 2014-2015

361 persons served through CCEP during 2015

385 persons served through Employment and Microenterprise Development (CMED) during 2015

154 students assisted through UCSP: 33 full-time and 121 through early college awareness tours during 2015

College going rate in the Burmese Community in Central Indiana increased from 43% (2012) to 72% (2015)

Continued Advocacy and reciprocal benefits that positively impact the community locally and nationally

In 2014 and 2015, 2,889 and 2,678 respective volunteer hours were committed through BACI which benefit the shared community

100% of graduating students who participated in UCP enrolled in College or Post-secondary education

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MESSAGE FROM Board Chairman



Ro Ding

Dear Partners and Supporters:

We are very pleased that we have been able to achieve numerous accomplishments for our community in four years. The statistics highlighted in our annual review indicate that the work of BACI has had a direct and substantial impact on the lives of many people; particularly in Central Indiana. Allow me to highlight some of our important achievements below.

Since 2011, BACI has assisted more than 3000 individuals with English language training, various immigration requirements, as well as provided support in gaining employment, scholarships, and college & university admissions. We have also held more than 200 meetings and presentations through our advocacy efforts. We were able to ensure 100 percent enrollment in postsecondary institutions for students participating in the BACI Upward College Program (UCP). Furthermore, more than 50 percent of current college students who were previously enrolled in the UCP received scholarships.

Women in our community, who completed training conducted by BACI and our partners, now run home-based Childcare/Daycare that both assists the community and provides a sustainable source of employment within our community. In 2014 and 2015, BACI contributed 5,567 volunteer hours to our community which is a 76 and 63 percent respective increase from 1,640 in 2013. In the past two years, BACI also saw a 21.4 percent increase in total revenue each year from 2013. We are particularly pleased by our efficiency. In 2014, BACI's overhead cost was only 4.8 percent of the total expenses, while 94.4 percent was spent for program and service provisions. The same level of efficiency for 2015 is projected.

My heartfelt thanks go to Mr. Elaisa Vahnie, Executive Director of BACI, for his exceptional leadership and tireless work for BACI and our community. My special thanks to all the BACI staff, team, and volunteers who continue to serve as a driving force for BACI and our community, and my humble hope is that they will continue this noble work for our mission and our community.

These achievements and successes could only happen with the support and prayers of our friends and community. Our Board members and I are looking forward to continuing working with you as we put forth our effort in furthering the mission of assisting members of our community to become self-sufficient and integrated individuals. I hope that you will continue to stand for this cause alongside us in 2016 and for many years to come. ■

Ro Ding
Chairman, Board of Directors

GREETINGS FROM Executive Director

Dear Friends:

My warmest greetings to you. It is a delight to have this opportunity to bring the Burmese American quarterly to you. In many ways, 2015 has been a blessing and an exciting time for all of us. This Issue underscores some of the major events of our engagement in advocacy and service during the year.

We are gently reminded again how fortunate we are to be in the land of opportunity and freedom, and are always thankful to the American people and Hoosiers for welcoming us as we start new lives with them. We have once again showed that when we come together and do something together, we can achieve great things.

Despite various challenges and obstacles that newcomers face as they join a new society in a completely different and new environment, the community as a whole continues to see the results of comprehensive advocacy efforts and constructive engagement, including a greater understanding and a more cohesive community; and becoming integrated progressively in this vibrant culture and global city.

With respect to our direct services—the three main programs designed and implemented through Community Integration Project—have been significantly expanded and strengthened. These include the Upward College Program (UCP) for High School students that helps the students with college preparedness linguistically and academically, as well as for their future success in becoming productive and contributing citizens of the society, the Civic and Culture Education Program (CCEP) that empowers new Americans with security in their rights and liberties, and Employment and Microenterprise Development (EMED), which assists newcomers to be self-sufficient and allows them to give back to their communities and contribute to economic growth. The overall outcomes of this service delivery continue to surpass the expectations.

Reflecting on our original philosophy and vision, and in partnership with our collaborators, 2015 saw a remarkably successful unprecedented U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference in Indianapolis. The meeting received overwhelming positive feedback with a desire to continue such events in future. All the more humbling is—as per the conference’s call for further support—the development and impact of the conference, with outcomes of continued advocacy engagement with Congressional Offices, the U.S. Department of State, USAID, and different stakeholders in Washington D.C. as well as in some other places, including inside Burma. We are encouraged to see how the diaspora communities here in the US have responded to help the victims and communities severely affected by the devastating floods and landslides inside the country in July/August. BACI leadership have taken active roles in the relief efforts in various capacities.

Now with the Nov. 8 poll which is widely viewed as a free and credible election in Burma, we hope that all sides and leaders in the country at this historic critical moment will be able to peacefully move forward to national reconciliation and sustained democratic transition under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party National League for Democracy. As we live today in an increasingly integrated, interconnected, and globalized world which is not only rapidly shaping our contemporaneous society and future, but also where local happenings are unbelievably swiftly affecting one another’s lives, we hope that there will be a greater space through which individuals both inside the country and in the diaspora community will be able to engage more broadly and effectively to contribute to a better future for all.

I would like to offer my sincere and profound thanks to members of the Board of Directors and Chairman Dr. Ro Ding for the support they have given to the BACI and to me. And I am fortunate to be surrounded by committed and passionate team members here at BACI. Our earnest thanks to our partners, volunteers, and supporters—I am sincerely grateful and deeply value your partnerships. With renewed commitment, I look forward to working with you in 2016 and many years to come in making our shared community a better place to live. ■

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2016.

Elaisa Vahnle

Bonnie Kane, BACI Board member, recognized with Golden Hoosier Award

Bonnie Kane, who served as Secretary of BACI Board, was recognized with the Golden Hoosier Award, the highest honor bestowed on a senior in Indiana by the Lt. Governor.

“It is my honor to recognize this group of outstanding Senior Hoosiers who are impacting their communities each day,” said Lt. Governor Ellspermann at the Indiana Statehouse where the award ceremony took place on May 18, 2015. “They represent the true Hoosier spirit of lifelong service and dedication to making a difference in the lives of many people.”

“I am very pleased that Bonnie has been chosen to be honoured with this important recognition,” said Elaisa Vahnje, director of BACI. “Bonnie's volunteer efforts not only touch the lives of BACI and the refugees from Burma in Indianapolis, her contributions also uphold the American values of cultural understanding and vibrant diversity which make the community a welcoming place to live. Bonnie is a true Golden Hoosier, someone who serves as a role model across generations and cultures.”

Bonnie recounted her involvement with BACI and the Burmese community in Indianapolis as a joyful journey by reflecting, “What a privilege to come to know and love the Burmese-Chin community here in Indianapolis!”

“In 2007 many newly-arrived refugees needed rice, towels and blankets. With the help of others, I was able to visit them in their apartments to help with basic needs. Saturday's morning ESL classes helped many in acquisition of English language. Several of the middle schoolers I worked with then are college students now. I helped establish Chin-American family partnerships, many of which continue today. In 2011 with the establishment of BACI, I was delighted to serve on the Board as advocate for the Chin. What a positive journey! It is amazing to observe and be a part of the changes in this group. BACI has proven a venue for steps in academic success for many.”

“Being involved with BACI surely has given me way more joy than I could ever have imagined. I hope to continue to promote education and integration to result in thriving in Indianapolis.”



Photo L-R: Lt. Governor Ellspermann, Bonnie Kane, Dr. John Wernert

BACI, in collaboration with our partners, has helped to foster a welcoming environment through a spectrum of programs that support the growing Burmese population. However, it is people like Bonnie who truly make Indianapolis a welcoming place for Burmese refugees. Her ongoing dedication and warmth transcend cultural and language barriers, and the Burmese community has come to recognize her face as a sign of generosity and hope as they embark on their new lives in Indiana.

The Golden Hoosier Award, which began in 2008, annually honors a group of outstanding Hoosier senior citizens for their lifetime of service and commitment to their communities. The award is considered one of the highest honors given by the State of Indiana to senior citizens. ■

BACI Recognized as Partner of The Year by Southport High School

We are humbled and greatly honored to be recognized as Community Partner of the 2014-2015 school year by Southport High School/Perry Township Schools. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincerest gratitude and deep appreciation to all teachers and the leadership of SHS/PTD for this honor as well as for caring, educating, and shaping the future of thousands of kids from Burma.

BACI is deeply appreciative of their continued support and great partnership. ■



Photo L - R: Dr. Thomas J. Little, Superintendent of Perry Township School District, Robert Bohannon, Assistant Superintendent, Elaisa Vahnne, Executive Director of BACI, Barbara J Brouwer, Principal of Southport High School, Vickie Carpenter, Assistant Superintendent.



Photo: **Emily Ngunhlei Sung** poses at “*the Heart of Taiwan through Dance*” event in which a group of BACI students participated. Emily was featured as one of the four students among 7,879 first-year students entering IU Bloomington this academic year, representing all 92 Indiana counties, 47 U.S. states, and 33 countries around the world. ■



Congratulations to all our Upward College Program participating students who have successfully graduated from high school and have embarked on their higher education and academic journey. We are very pleased that many of them do so with some prestigious scholarships, including **Emily Ngunhlei Sung** and **Elly Mawi** with the highly coveted Lilly Endowment Scholarship while **Ral Lian Khum** (pictured above) was awarded the Gates Millennium Scholarship. ■



Above: **Lian Sang** a.k.a. Nge Nge received his Masters in Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology from IUPUI.

Nge Nge has been working for BACI and our community for five years. He is a very dedicated, hardworking individual, and his passion for community and public service has enabled him to gain incredible recognition and appreciation in our community. We are fortunate to have Nge Nge in our community. ■

Congratulations!

Right: **Irene Ngunuk** earned Doctor of Medicine from Michigan State University. She said “I came to a land of opportunity empty handed 11 years ago; today I finally achieved my dream of becoming a doctor. I could not have made it this far without my God, my family and friends. Thank you so much for all the love, support, and prayers.”

Irene is a volunteer and consistent supporter of BACI work. ■



Left: **Mai Hlawn Kip Tlem Zathang** received her Bachelor of Science (BS) in Accounting from the University of Evansville in May this year, with “Outstanding Senior Service Awards” the highest honors the University presents to one female and one male senior, according to the University.

Her volunteer service to our community has been outstanding. “Hlawn Zathang is involved with the Burmese American Community Institute...that helps students and people in the community focusing on college research, tutoring, sustained economic self-sufficiency and long-term integration.”

Hlawn was one of the first students to get involved with BACI college preparatory activities in 2011, and is the very first college student among the participants to come back to help our community by volunteering with us in summer 2012 and 2013 and interning in 2014.

Overall, Zathang says, “It is obvious that through my four years at the University of Evansville, I have not only grown in an education [a] aspect, but I also discovered what it means to be a good citizen. I also realize the size of my responsibility starting with my family, to the community, and to the world.” ■



Upward College Program – Investing in People and Education

STEM with Purdue University



Above: **Minjung Ryu, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor at Purdue University, who leads the STEM component of Upward College Program, giving a presentation on the curriculum, goals, and expectations. ■

For the fifth year, we have successfully kick-started our Upward College Program Academic Year 2015-2016 on August 31 with a committed group of students and instructional team members. This year we are particularly excited to be able to add STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) into the UCP in collaborative partnership with faculty members of Purdue University. ■



Left: Students in SAT prep session, scholarship application assistance session, and sharing snacks during a break from work. Enrollment in the program has increased considerably to 67 students for the current academic year.

Below: **Lian Ceu**, Program Director of UCP, working with the instructional team and students during the kick-off session.





Left: Responding to the dire humanitarian situation faced by the people in Burma who had been severely affected by floods and landslides in July/August, the Chins in Indiana/CCI formed the Chin Emergency Relief Committee (CERC), which has raised over \$114,000.00. Estimated of over \$1 million has been raised by the Burmese diaspora in the US to help the relief efforts. ■

The Importance of Higher Education: Collaborative Partnership & Leadership

Right: Engaging through collaborative partnership with Perry Meridian High School, bringing the message of the Importance of Higher Education and how to better prepare to succeed.



Below: Our UCP students engaging in a college tour (IU Bloomington), special events, and individualized assistance sessions. The Upward College Program at BACI is implemented with a comprehensive design which includes tutoring, mentoring, standardized test prep, Life Skills, STEM, field trips, community and volunteer projects, leadership development etc. ■





Self-Sufficiency; Contributing To Economic Growth

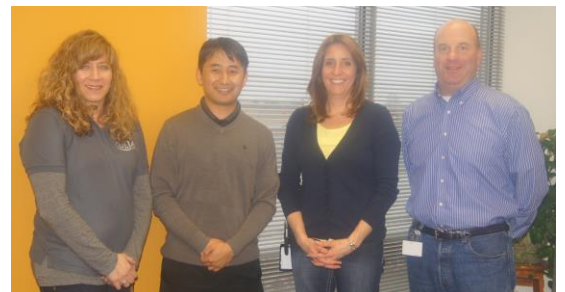


Employment and Microenterprise Development Project (EMED) assists refugee community members with job placement through organized job fairs, one-on-one employment assistance, referrals, and provides technical assistance to individuals wishing to venture into their own small business. By doing so, it hopes to help newcomers to be self-sufficient and allows them to give back to their communities and contribute to economic growth.

It also connects employers with the community and advocates for sustained employment and equal employment opportunities.

Left: Our student volunteers in action – helping community members and newcomers with employment and job applications.

Below: **Lian Sang**, program director of EMED and his team members in the making of partnerships with the employers that mutually assist our community members with their immediate economic self-sufficiency.



Empowering New Americans *with* Security in their Rights and Liberties



Above: BACI staff and volunteers undergoing training provided by our staff Attorney Clare Corado. The session was conducted as part of our commitment to professional development of our team members as well as for an effective delivery of quality services.

Right & below: Our community members seen in orientation sessions and classes of English and Civic Instructions, as well as during the US Citizenship mock interviews, and Green Card and Naturalization information session conducted in collaborative partnership with the USCIS. These components are implemented as part of Civic and Culture Education program at the Institute. ■



Achieve the American Dream!



Sustaining and Expanding Partnerships

Recognizing and appreciating the power and reciprocal benefits of collaboration, BACI is very pleased to be able to continue establishing its partnership with educational institutions, government agencies, and with other service providers while maintaining the existing ones.

Some of the main collaborations in 2015 include the expansion of our existing partnership with several academic units at the University of Indianapolis through service learning and volunteerism, a new partnership with faculty members of Purdue University in conjunction with the Upward College Program, exploration of further opportunities and continuation of a partnership with Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis as well as with several schools and centers at Indiana University Bloomington in various forms, the establishment of a new partnership with Ball State University through the Myanmar Initiative and continuing to work collaboratively with Ivy Tech Community College and Kaplan College via English language programs, and strengthening our concrete partnership with Perry Schools: Southport High School and Perry Meridian High School. Additionally, partnerships through the Annual College & Youth Summit have also gone up.

Likewise, BACI continues to be working collaboratively with the City of Indianapolis and its Office of International and Culture Affairs, Indianapolis Public Libraries, as well as with several service providers in Central Indiana. The partnership and the level of support from St. Franciscan Health continue to be of great value and help to our community. These dynamic collaborative partnerships with various entities at a variety of levels and ways have been tremendously helpful to our community, and are deeply valued and appreciated. ■



Above: Professor Fengyi Kuo and her graduate students at IUPUI pictured with BACI executive director Elaisa Vahnie after research presentation of IU School of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences' Occupational Therapy research presentation day. Dr. Kuo and her class implement and teach Life Skills curriculum at BACI Upward College Program.

Celebrating Vibrant Diversity and Rich Culture



Above: The USDOS/IUB's BYLP and BACI's UCP participants dressed in different ethnic attire of Myanmar - i.e. representing eight major ethnic groups of the country: Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Shan, Mon, Bama, and Arakan.

For the second year in April, the BACI hosted an event in collaboration with IU's Burma Youth Leadership Program for Burmese youth in central Indiana. The event included visits to the State House, Mayor's Office, and Monument Circle. The programs are designed to inspire Burmese youths to become future leaders of the society.

Our Students Engage the Heart of Taiwan through Dance



Our students at the Upward College Program had the privilege of being part of and enjoyed watching an amazing Traditional Dance performance brought by The National Dong Hwa University Dance Troupe from Taiwan who are touring the United States. The students reflected that they brought us a message of the importance of remembering our roots, how to not only appreciate diversity, different cultures, and ethnicities, but also to celebrate them.



Being Part of a Global Indy. *Above and left:* Our students participating in the International Fashion Show as part of promoting and celebrating Global Indy at the Annual Sister Cities Festival.

Below: A group of Chin dancers performing the Chin Cultural Dance “RAWKHATHLAK” also known as Bamboo dance during the 4th Annual International Sisters Cities Festival in Indianapolis. Rawkhathlak is one of the most spectacular dances being adopted by many Chin-Mizo-Kuki groups. Rawkhathlak is growing popular in many educational institutions in Myanmar and India as well as in some other parts of the world.

Congratulations to Tial Tin Rem (*below*) on winning Sister Cities International Scholarship. As part of this scholarship program, Tial attended the International G20 Youth Summit held in Minneapolis, Minnesota this summer. Tial was one of the two young leaders selected to represent Indianapolis at the Global Summit. The Summit provides young leaders the opportunities to engage with and discuss key social and economic issues that are facing and challenging today’s global society. ■



Community Service and Volunteerism



Celebrating Volunteerism, Community Service--In honor of the courage and resilience of millions of refugees around the world on World Refugee Day June 20th, BACI's Upward College Program scholars volunteered at Indy Urban Acre Farm (*below*) after a Tree Planting Project at Southport Elementary School.

Above: BACI executive director Elaisa Vahnne, Perry Township Schools District Assistant Superintendent Vickie Carpenter, the district EL coordinator Janet Nataren and BACI Board Member Nguncer Bualteng, BACI programs director Lian Sang, together with our summer researchers and team members.

Right & below: Van Hnem, the 1st place winner of Essay Contest on the topic of "The Importance of Community and Volunteer Service." Van Hnem read the first place winning essay at Indy Urban Acre farm where the students engaged in giving back to the Community Service Project. A team of students that won the poster competition on the theme of "One World, One Community".



Upward College Summer Research Program



Technical Terms and Usages of Ethnic Names of Burma/Myanmar

Burma (or Myanmar) is country name whereas Burman or Bama refers to one of the ethnic groups of Burma, a majority ethnic group. Chin, Kachin, Shan, Karenni (or Kayar), Karen, Mon, Arakan (or Rakhaine), Bama (or Burman)—each represents eight major ethnic groups of Burma.

The term "Burmese" usually refers to, or technically and simply means, either the people from Burma, or the origin language of the Burman ethnic group, the language commonly spoken by the people of the country.

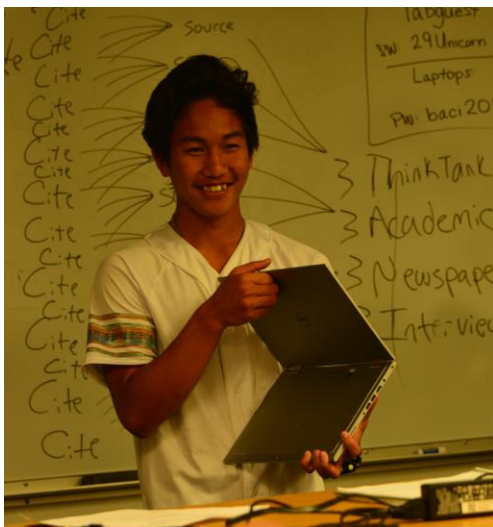
Should it be Burma or Myanmar?

The past repressive military regime changed its name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989, which is the year after the 88 nationwide uprising where the peaceful protesters were brutally responded to and thousands were killed.

The country is known as Myanmar in many countries and recognized at the United Nations. However, along with the democratic forces, the West, specifically the US and the UK do not recognize the legitimacy of change of the name. They therefore officially use "Burma" up to the present.

Will a new government led by the NLD change the name back to Burma?

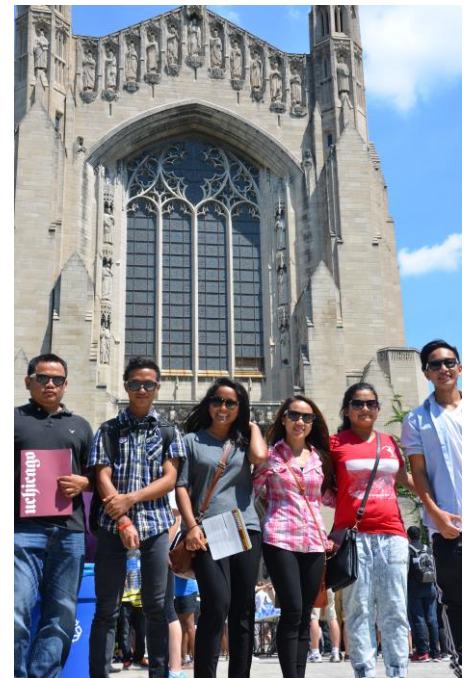
Recognizing the main reason of use of "Burma" after it has been changed is for political and legitimacy reasons, rather than its technicality or meaning—and weighing all factors—it is highly likely that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party NLD will be opted to choose to endorse the name Myanmar. Nevertheless, the development with respect to the name Burma/Myanmar is something to be observed in 2016.





Leadership Development and Educational Tour: The Summer Research Program has included a special leadership and educational tour, first visiting Washington, D.C. in 2013, New York in 2014 and this year the program visited Chicago. These trips help the students become more culturally and socially integrated into their new society and support their college preparation and future career success.

This summer College campus visit included Indiana University Bloomington, Purdue University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Indianapolis.





A study confirmed the continued growth of the Burmese population in the United States and the rising number of Burmese high school graduates who are now attending U.S. colleges and universities.

Thirty-three Indianapolis-area Burmese high school scholars, conducted under the adult academic research supervisors, who participated in BACI Upward College Summer Program investigated issues and challenges facing ethnic communities from Burma now living in Indiana and the United States.

The researchers found that 43 percent of the students were attending universities in 2012; 57 percent in 2013; 72 percent in 2014; and among the 2015 graduates, 83 percent are planning to attend college in the future, of them 70 percent enroll for this fall.

The findings of the study show that approximately 150,000 Burmese have been admitted to the United States since 2000. Of the 226,000 total number of Burmese in the United States, an estimated 80,000 and 20,000 reside in California and Indiana respectively, and approximately 14,000 are making Indianapolis their new home. The findings included the number of primary Burmese refugees resettled in Indiana since 2000 was 11,082. This data indicates that 45 percent of the total number of Burmese in Indiana are either secondary migrants from other U.S. cities, entered Indiana prior to 2000, or were born in the state.

To address some of the issues faced by the communities based on the findings, such as equal employment opportunities, culture integration etc., the researchers also presented policies and action solution recommendation to the stakeholders. ■

Photo: BACI Board Vice Chair Pu San Hlei Thang presenting a certificate of appreciation to Maureen Hoffmann, a Ph.D. student at the University of Arizona for her contributions to summer study (*above*), Board Chair Dr. Ro Ding presenting an award to Van Hnem who won the first price on the essay contest (*below*), and summer researchers presenting the research findings with action and solution policy recommendations (*in groups*) on research presentation day on August 1, 2015.





College admissions officers and scholarship fund representatives from various institutions participated and gave presentations on post-secondary education opportunities at the 4th Annual College & Youth Summit on Aug 1, 2015. This year we are honored and fortunate to have Ivy Tech Community College, IUPUI, Franklin College, Purdue University, Marian University, Kaplan College, APIASF, CICF, Ohio Wesleyan University, and the University of Indianapolis attended the summit. Our special thanks to these institutions and all other partners for their support to make the event such a success. ■

Photo: The representatives of the participating Institutions at the 4th College & Youth Summit (*below*) and the BACI Upward College Summer Scholars Program participating researchers (*above*).



“Leadership is a knowledge, effective utilization of diverse resources towards a goal that maximizes the common and greater good.” - EV



L-R: Mai Sung Chin, Mai Nummawi Bualteng, Mai Thin Yu Mon, Pu Van Tuah Piang, George Hmung, Thawng Zapum Lian at the panel.

Words and Advice for College Students and High School Students

Our panelists representing diverse educational and professional backgrounds—from healthcare professional to human rights advocate—participated in the “Educational Journey and Professional Development” panel hosted at the BACI 4th Annual College & Youth Summit on August 1, 2015.

It was truly an inspiring, engaging, and interactive discussion. We are thankful to each panelist for their time, and for sharing their experience and knowledge, as well as insight and advice for their younger ones.

The following is a brief recollection of what each panelist said to high school and college students from Burma.

“I cannot imagine myself not being educated with a US education when you have the opportunity to do so in this land of opportunity. And I do not want our people to be seen as uneducated people.” - **Nunmawi Bualteng**

Mawi Mawi has a Master’s degree from India, but resumed her higher education after she came to the US, and is now working as a registered nurse at the Marion County Department of Health.

“Regardless of your age, your educational background, you can dream and achieve anything in the US — there is a saying “Where There’s A Will There’s A Way” — all that matters is a firm DETERMINATION to achieve one’s educational and career goals. Anything is possible here.” - **Mai Sung Chin**

Mai Sung Chin (BSN, RN, WCC, OMS) came to the US as an adult and resumed her higher education from the beginning and earned a nursing degree in 2008.

“There is a saying “Practice Makes Perfect,” and the best way to practice English words is by saying them aloud a hundred times, no problem that is how you are going to learn.” He said he applied that same strategy in learning English pronunciation, and it worked well for him during his college years. - **George Hmung**

George, native to Burma, holds a bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering, and is now working as a Manufacturing Engineer at Nachi Tool America.

“We can’t turn our back to our people back home; they are still suffering many forms of rights abuses and poverty...they need your help.” - **Mai Thin Yu Mon,**

Mai Thin Yu is a Program Officer at CHRO and Participant of Liberty and Leadership Forum at the George W. Bush Presidential Centre.

“I wish my motivation to earn an Engineering degree was how to solve the problem.” - **Thawng Zapum Lian**

Thawng Zapum Lian is a Software Engineer at IBM and is a regular volunteer tutor with BACI Upward College Program.

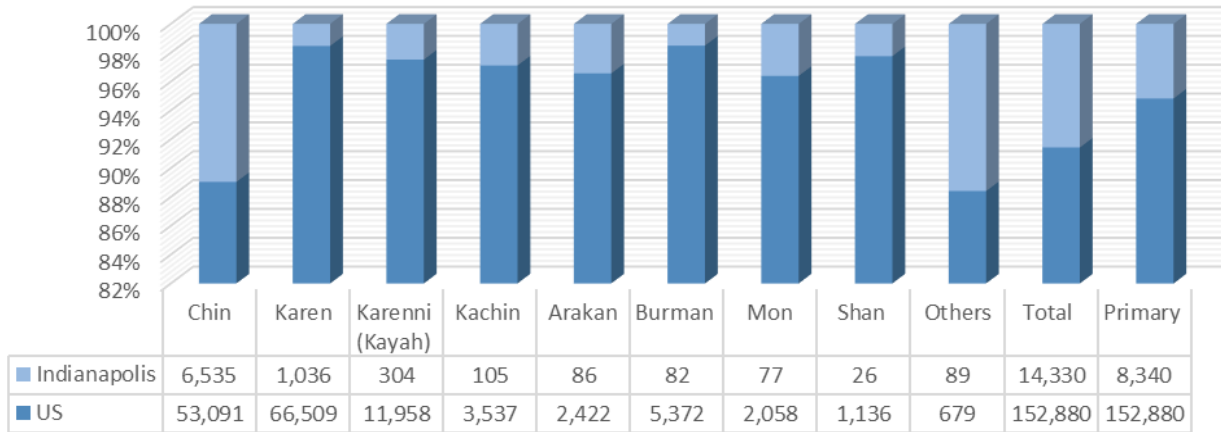
“The most important thing in life is to make your mom proud by giving back to your community when and where you can, no matter what -- small or big. But be focused on what you are doing first [if you are a student, earning a degree should be your first priority].”

- **Van Tuah Piang**

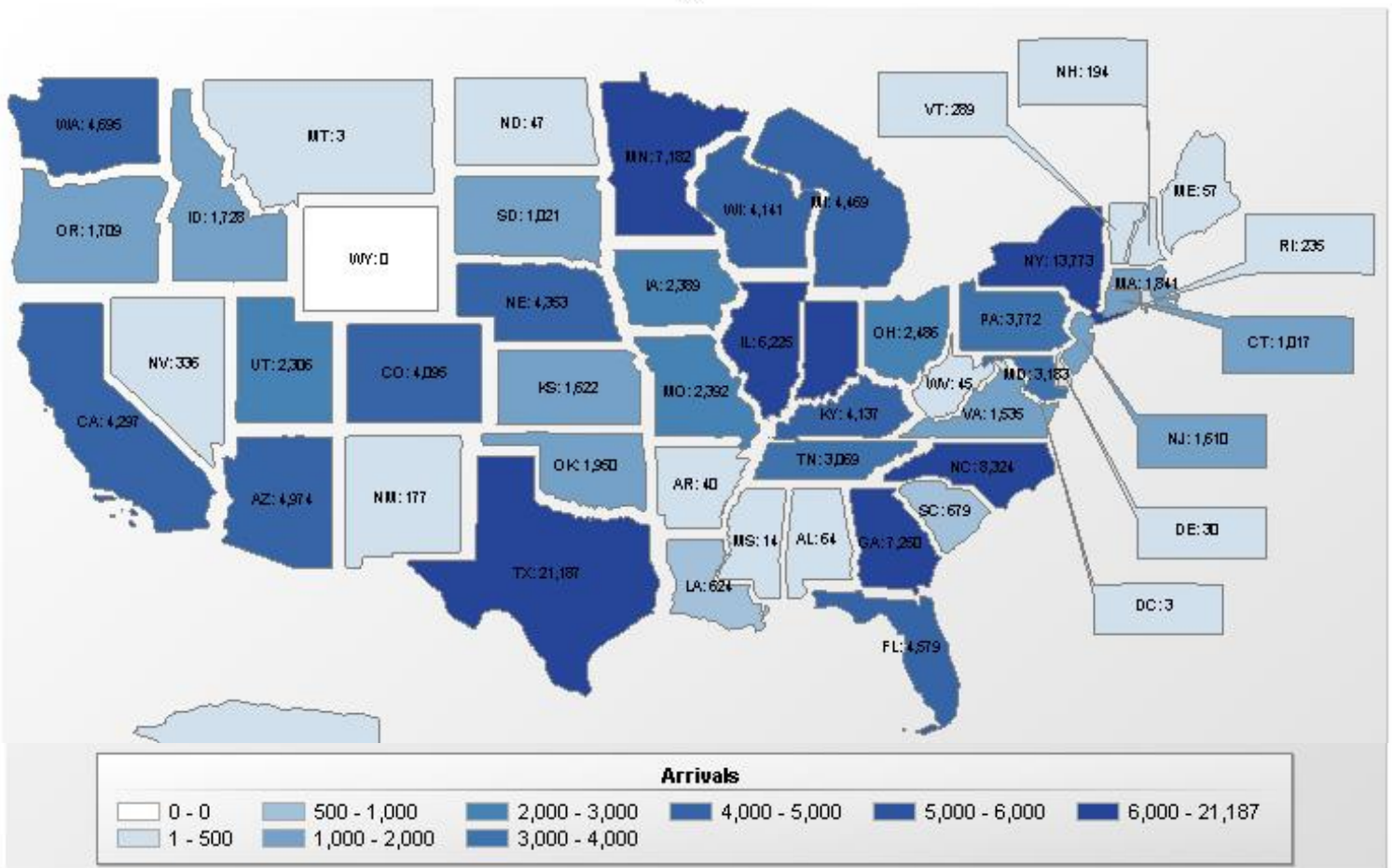
One of the four Chins who arrived and lived in Indianapolis in 1997, Van came to the US under a scholarship program and has been working for his community in various capacities soon after he earned a bachelor degree from IUPUI, Including being a founder Board member of the BACI and is currently serving his community as Refugee Health Advocate at Marion County Department of Health. ■

The Burmese Population in the U.S., Indiana, and Indianapolis

CY2000 - CY2015 as of September 30, 2015

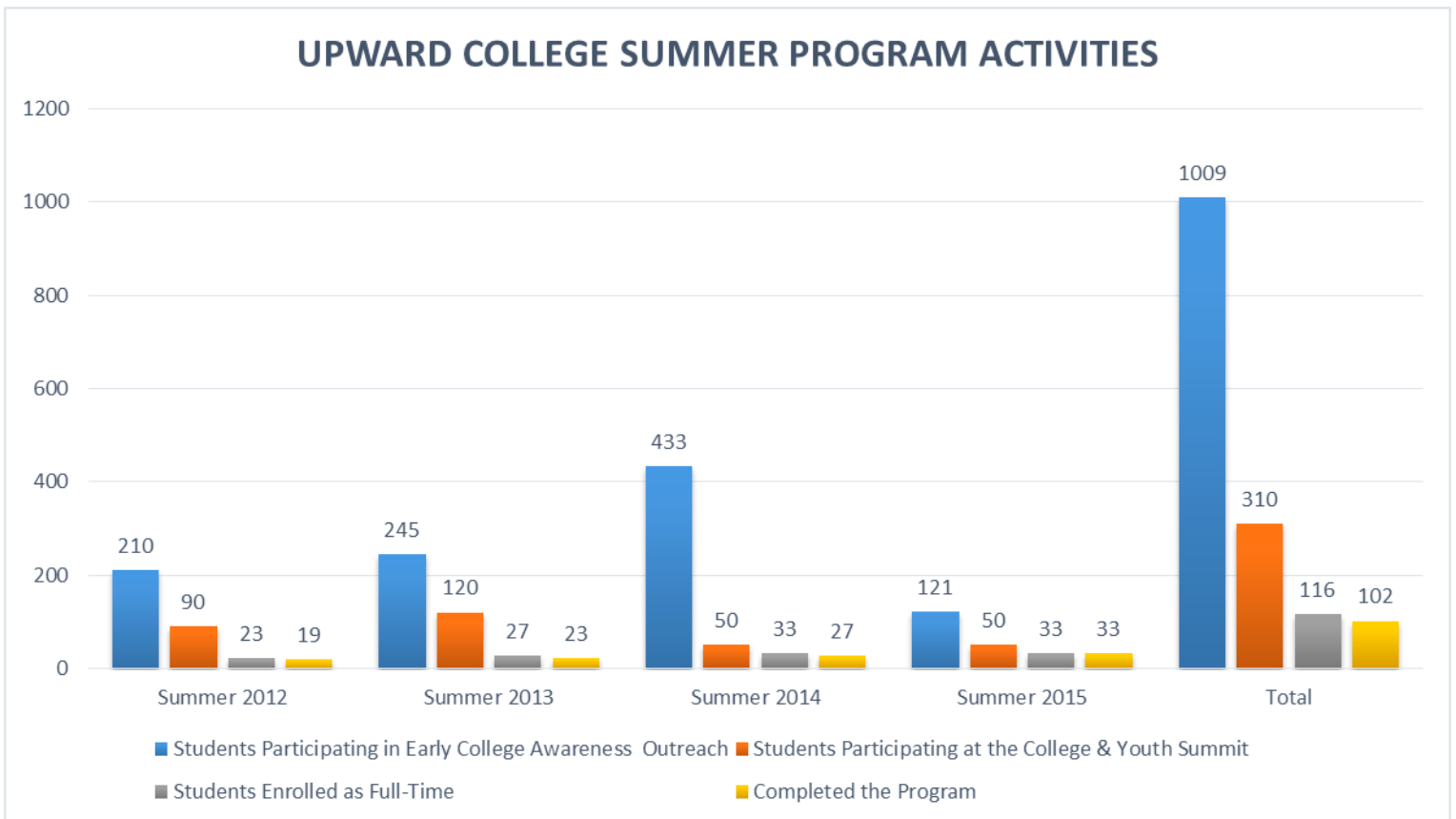
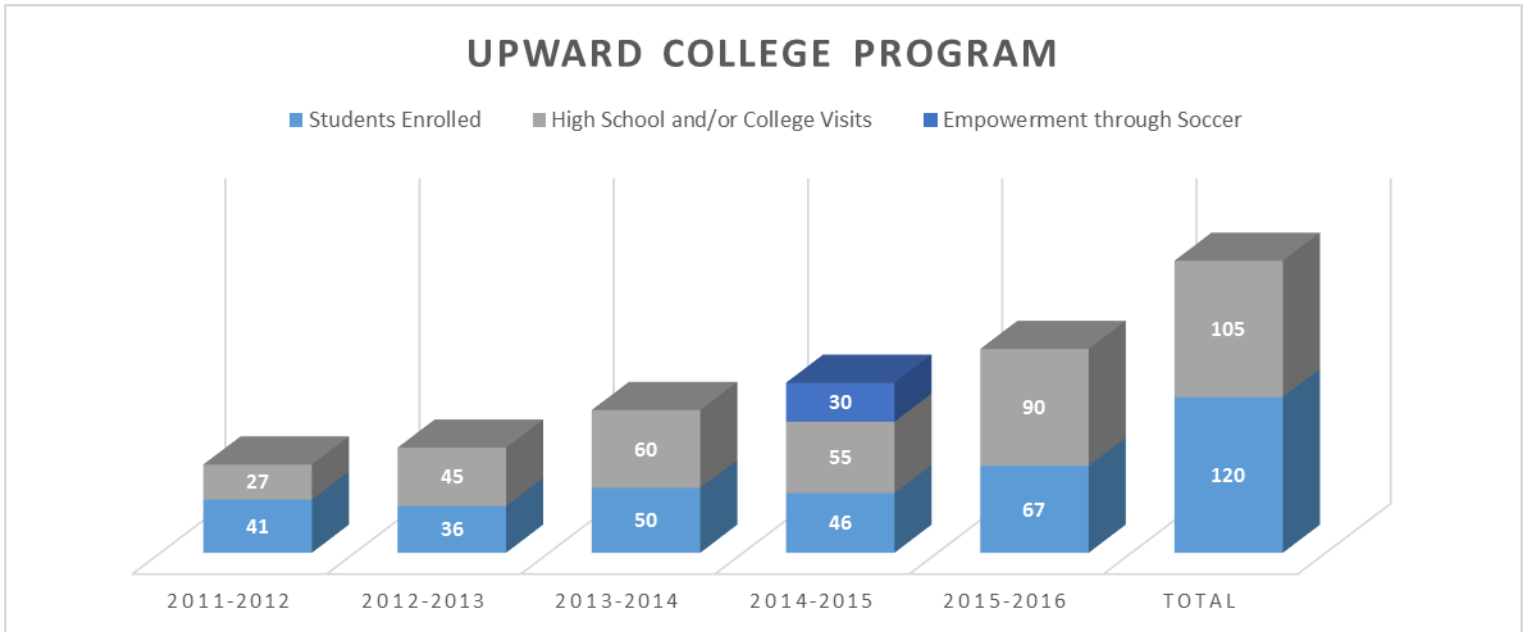


Nationality of Burma



Other groups include Chinese, Rohingya (4156 total US), Mixed, etc. Secondary migrants and others are included when calculating the number for Indiana and Indianapolis. The total Burmese population in Indianapolis is 14,330 and Indiana is 20,529; of which 11,751 are primarily resettled to Indianapolis (8,340), Fort Wayne (3,247), and other cities (164). Based on information from Burmese communities across the nation, the total Burmese population in the US has reached over 260,000. Raw data and interactive map retrieved from the U.S. Department of State's RPC.

The Statistical Chart of the BACI Upward College Program



The U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference

Welcoming Remarks by Elaisa Vahnne



Elaisa Vahnne

His Excellency Ambassador U Kyaw Tin, speakers and panelists, guests of honor, ladies and gentlemen –

It is truly an honor to have this opportunity to give a brief welcoming message this morning. I am very pleased that you are able to join us today for this special event: the U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference in Indianapolis. There are over 200,000 individuals of Burmese origin currently living in the United States. We are thankful to the American people for welcoming us as we have started our new lives here. Recently though, it has been an exciting time for us as Burma undergoes an ostensible reform process after decades of isolation. The country has indicated a desire to open up more to the international community. Expatriates and the international community alike see a window of opportunity to constructively engage, pull together intellectual and other resources, and contribute to the reform process and development of the country. The U.S.—and Indiana in particular— is strongly but uniquely positioned to contribute to these efforts.

In line with that understanding and philosophy, this conference brings together government officials, academics, businesses, civil society and community leaders, and other stakeholders from both the U.S. and Burma to promote substantive dialogue and examine critical issues and opportunities for the future of Burma. By doing so— firstly, we hope that participants will have a greater interest and deeper understanding of the U.S. policy priorities towards Burma,

—as well as the important assistance that the U.S. government has been providing to the Burmese inside the country.

Secondly, we must move forward with faith and hope. Briefly revisiting our history, Burma's political crisis is deeply rooted in ethnic conflict, with the longest civil war in the world—and the country had been ravaged by systematic rights deprivation and poverty for more than half a century. But with the change steps taken by President U Thein Sein's government in recent years, we have seen the opportunity to engage and effect further change. And we must move forward—to a solution of national reconciliation and sustained peace. To be able to do so, as global citizens, it is important for us to stay engaged, learn more about and perhaps even positively effect the ongoing ceasefire negotiations as part of the peace process, the proposed political dialogue, and particularly the constitutional reform and the 2015 elections as they are critically important to the future of the people of Burma.

Thirdly, recognizing that investing in people and education for a sophisticated society and economic development is essential to create a sustained democratic society and continued progress in the country; we hope that this conference will contribute to the articulation and implementation of the notion of resource mobilization and recycling back as well as responsible business investments which often require in-depth, substantive, and open discussions such as this one.

By the end of today, our hope is that every participant at this conference will walk away with a greater appreciation of the diversity and the complex nature of Burma's issue, and with a deeper understanding—perhaps with a willingness and inspirations of democratic ideals and values—of how we can collaboratively work and collectively contribute to the future of Burma.

Unmistakably, we believe that this conference combined with such a network of productive global citizens will obviously serve as one of the many efforts to help foster local institutional capacity and ultimately promote liberty, sustained peace, and prosperity in Burma in the long-run.

Let me offer our sincere appreciation to all of our speakers today for their time and expertise as they will be sharing with us their extensive knowledge. Our special thanks to Ambassador His Excellency U Kyaw Tin, who is our keynote speaker today, for warmly accepting our invitation to come down to Indianapolis.

Last but not least, may I offer my heartfelt thanks to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for sending a video keynote for this conference despite her extremely tight schedule—my highest esteem for her unwavering commitment to democracy in Burma and her leadership for the Burmese people.

Let me conclude my welcoming note by thanking our conference partners—the Office of International Development (OID), Maurer School of Law Center for Constitutional Democracy (CCD), and especially Kelley School of Business Institute for International Business (IIB) at Indiana University Bloomington—not only for helping make this conference possible, but also for their important work for Burma and its people.

You all are warmly welcome to the first U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference. We sincerely hope that this event will promote the spirit of constructive engagement and democracy, and help foster a network of connections and long lasting friendships among the participants. Thank you. ■

“Not only should elections be free and fair, the results of the elections must be respected, and there must be reassurance for everybody concerned, for all concerned, that after the elections, there will be stability, there will be peace, there will be not just respect for the will of the people, but a genuine will to implement that will as expressed through the elections.”

The following is the full text of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s video keynote address delivered at the U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference held at Indiana University Purdue University (IUPUI), Indianapolis, IN, USA on May 29, 2015. Video is accessible for view on the Burmese American Community Institute’s website: www.baci-indy.org.

Video Message by Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seen through video message

I would like to begin by thanking the Burmese American Community Institute of [and] Indiana University for inviting me to deliver this keynote address. It is always a pleasure for me to address fellow Burmese overseas, because although they are no longer living in our country, I feel very much they are still a part of us and that they would like to do everything they can—not just to maintain their ties with our country but to help us to develop in the best possible way. I understand that the main topics of this conference will be constitutional reform and economic development. Both development in its own way—the political development, economic development.

We have always put a lot of emphasis on political development because that has been lacking sadly in our country for the last few decades, and because of the lack of political development, we have not been able to develop economically either.

I think a lot of you would be more interested in Business than in the politic, but as a politician I can say very frankly that my greater interest is in politic, because I think that good, sound, honest politics lies at the foundation of a good, sound economy. If we do not have rule of law, if we do not have a government that is transparent and accountable, and that manages to gain the confidence of the people, we shall never be able to develop in the way that will benefit our people.

Development is not simply growth. I think I do not need to explain this anymore, everybody now accepts that development has to be more than just growth. Development has to be a better life for the great majority of our people, not for just a small-privileged elite. I fear that this is where we seem to be headed at the moment. All the economic reforms that some people have tried to focus on have done more to help the already

-privileged, rather than to help those who are suffering from poverty, who are suffering from the ill effects of an authoritarian regime that was in place in our country for half a century.

If we have to start with reform anywhere, it should be with the constitutional reform. The 2008 constitution under which the elections in 2010 were held, and under which the elections of this year are going to be held, too, was not drawn up with a practicing of democracy in mind.

It was drawn up with the intention of preserving the status quo as far as possible while making the minimum concession to democratic demands. Because of that, our people, under this constitution, are not in a position to exercise full authority over the government, and if it is not the government for the people, by the people, of the people how can we say that this is democratic. So constitutional reform comes first, and particularly we should have some constitution reforms pushed through before the general election this year. I don't know how many of you are aware that the constitution of this country cannot be amended if the military representatives within the legislature are against it. In short, the military representatives and elected who make up twenty five of all the legislatures in our country—meaning to say not just the national legislatures, but also the regional and state legislatures—they have the right of veto over amendments to essential parts of the constitution.

If the elections later in this year are to be free and fair, the constitution has to be amended, in a way that would give the people full right to choose the kind of government they wish to see in their country. Economic reforms can be fair, only if the elections this year are free and fair. Free and fair are two very short and simple words, but they cover adequately all that we need for our elections. Not just free elections, but fair elections—which means a level playing ground; which means a constitution that will allow our people to choose the kind of representatives they want, freely without interventions from any privileged group.

So, I would like all of you to focus on this crucial issue for the year: the elections of 2015. Changes that might be necessary in order to ensure that the elections are free and fair and held under circumstances that will promote stability and peace in our country. Not only should elections be free and fair, the results of the elections must be respected, and there must be reassurance for everybody concerned, for all concerned, that after the elections, there will be stability, there will be peace, there will be not just respect for the will of the people, but a genuine will to implement that will as expressed through the elections. If these conditions are met, the way will be open for the kind of economic development that would benefit not just my country, but all of you who are interested in investing in Burma. Investments can be safe only if there is stability and peace within a country.

We have not yet achieved peace in our country. I am sure some of you are aware that peace negotiations have not started yet, although ceasefire negotiations have been going on for the last several years. Only if we take the necessary political steps, will we be able to go forward to take the necessary economic steps that will make our country once again one of the leading Nations of Southeast Asia. I am confident that with your help, that is to say, you, Burmese who are living abroad, as well as you, friends of Burma, interested in helping us in grow and develop in the right way, that we will be able to achieve our goals.

The NLD [National League for Democracy] will be producing its economy policy paper before long. So those of you who are interested in knowing what they can expect under the NLD government will, I am sure, be very very interested in studying this.

Concerns have been expressed that an NLD government would not honor contracts signed with this President's Government. I would like to make it quite clear that the NLD believes in the rule of law. And all contracts that have been signed in the right way, and in accordance with the best practices will be honored. We do not want people to feel insecured in Burma. Our people must first feel secured, and all those who are participating in the development process of our country—whether they be businessmen, whether they be simply friends of Burma—I want all of them also to feel secured.

So through you, I would like to send this message, we are now at the important point in the history of our country. The next few months will decide whether we are going forward to democratic governance and genuine economic development, or whether we are going to stagnate in a facade of democratic rule which is in fact not much better than an authoritarian administration.

I would like to ask all of you to help us to achieve our goal, which I believe is, the goal that you would also wish to achieve. Thank you.



*Slightly different version of the article on page 32 appeared in an online **The Diplomat Magazine** as well as in **New Mandala**, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, the Australian National University (ANU).*

Keynote and Greetings

Right: **H.E. U Kyaw Tin**, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Republic of Myanmar to the United Nations, delivering keynote at the conference. U Kyaw Tin has served as the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations since September 2012. Prior to his appointment, U Kyaw Tin served as Myanmar's Ambassador to Canada. Between October 2008 and March 2011, he served as Director-General of the Political Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Yangon, having been Deputy Director-General from 2007 to 2008, and Director of the South and West Asia Division from 2005 to 2006.

Below: **Chris Milligan**, USAID Burma Mission Director provided audio greetings and following is the full text of his remarks.



Thank you so much for the opportunity to pass along my greetings and wishes for a successful conference. This conference is an opportunity to hear from a variety of voices on where the country is now, the progress it has made, and the real challenges that remain. As you all know, this is a country of rich history and diversity. It is also a country in which governance, territory, and even identity are contested. It is a complex and politically sensitive operating environment. Countrywide, mistrust and grievances from decades of conflict still act as impediments to peace. And communal violence continues to displace hundreds of thousands. Yet the country is closer than ever before to ending decades of civil war, and this year power has been put on the table. All eyes will be on the first democratic elections in decades.

The election will be an important marker in reaffirming the commitment to political reform. The United States welcomes the government's pledge to hold credible, inclusive, and transparent parliamentary elections. We are working together with government, civil society, political parties, and media to promote a peaceful inclusive election environment. While the elections will be important to reforms, it is also important that democracy delivers; that the reforms reach everyday people. USAID assistance builds democratic institutions and strengthens human rights. It improves the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands of communities. It furthers the ongoing peace process and supports the development of a stable inclusive society. It is particularly inspiring to me to see how the diaspora are playing a central role; bringing their unique blend of local expertise and international experience to the country's reforms. Civil society has responded as well; courageously increasing their organization, advocacy, and effectiveness in promoting continued reforms despite the difficult environment and continued challenges they face. As a development agency, it is important to remember that the international community should not prioritize its agenda over local initiatives. Or worse, prioritize development goals over the resolution of political grievances. The fact is, the reform process will succeed only if the people of this country actively participate in key decisions affecting their future. While we have seen progress over the past few years, as President Obama noted during his last visit, a long road lies ahead.

The U.S. government remains committed to supporting the people of this country in the ongoing transition. To that end, I look forward to learning about the insights and conclusions reached in today's important conference. ■

The U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference

Indianapolis, Indiana

May 29, 2015

Rationale of the Conference

The first U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference was successfully held at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 29, 2015. The conference was organized in collaborative partnership with Indiana University Bloomington Kelley School of Business's Institute for International Business, the Office of International Development at Indiana University Bloomington, and the Center for Constitutional Democracy at Indiana University Bloomington's Maurer School of Law. This was an unprecedented event in the Indianapolis area. Burma has attracted immense attention in the media and policy circles as it undergoes political, economic, and legal reforms and reenters the international stage. Expatriates and the international community alike now see a window of opportunity to engage, pull together intellectual and other resources, and contribute to the reform process and development of the country. The U.S.—and Indiana in particular— is strongly but uniquely positioned to contribute to these efforts.



Panelists at the main panel session

Conference Content

Indianapolis served as a very fitting host for this conference, with nearly 20,000 Burmese individuals calling the state of Indiana home. The conference was organized with the intent of highlighting U.S. policy priorities towards Burma, the growing diplomatic and business relationships between the two countries, and Burma's economic and political environment. The U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference brought together over 150 attendees—including government officials, academics, business consultants, civil society leaders, and other stakeholders from both the U.S. and Burma—in order to promote substantive open dialogue and examine critical issues and opportunities for the future of Burma. The event simultaneously sought to connect well-educated Burmese-Americans with policy makers and entities interested in or already pursuing initiatives in Burma in order to foster relationships that ultimately promote local institutional capacity, as well as peace and prosperity in Burma.

H.E. Kyaw Tin, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, delivered a keynote speech. Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi provided a video keynote address, while USAID Burma Mission Chief Chris Milligan provided audio remarks, underscoring the present status of U.S. engagement with Burma on the ground. Dr. Patrick O'Meara, Vice President Emeritus of International Affairs and Special Adviser to the President at Indiana University Bloomington, provided opening remarks as well, reflecting upon the establishment of the Burmese Refugee Scholarship Program (BRSP) at IU under the aegis of the U.S. Department of State. Of particular note, a handful of alumni from the BRSP program were at the conference to reunite and engage in the historic event. ■

Consensus and Common Understanding of the Conference

The U.S.-Myanmar Engagement Conference

May 29, 2015

The conference convened three panel discussions: "Contextualizing Myanmar", "Doing Business in and with Myanmar", and "The Political and Legal Reform Process: Current Status and Future." A group of esteemed panelists engaged in the three dynamic panels: Anne M. Gillman, U.S. Department of Commerce; Dr. Nicholas Farrelly, Australian National University; Dany Khy, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); Aye Sanda Lwin, Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Washington, D.C.; Jay Martin, US-ASEAN Business Council, Harn Yawngwe, Euro-Burma Office; and Dr. Nehginpao Kipgen, independent Burma researcher. Jane Gehlhausen of the Office of Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Charles Reafsnnyder of Indiana University Bloomington's Office of International Development, and Mark Cooper of the U.S. Department of Commerce office in Indiana served as the panel moderators.

After a day of in-depth and extensive discussions, during which panelists and attendees actively participated and engaged, the conference reached the following consensus and common understanding on the topics covered:

1. The conference recognizes the complex nature of the Myanmar's political crises, which is deeply rooted in ethnic conflict and appreciate the fact that the Burmese military has initiated the reform process which is being undertaken so far by President U Thein Sein's government.
2. The U.S. engagement with Burma and multifaceted approach policy towards the Southeast Asia nation, maintained selective sanctions imposed on the country, while engaging and supporting various mechanisms and organizations to further democracy and development.
3. The conference understands that a good number of the U.S. companies have begun conducting business in the country with a belief that such will have long-lasting positive impacts for both U.S. businesses and the Myanmar people. After undergoing numerous iterations, the legal environment and the process for foreign investment remains a significant challenge. The Myanmar government is working towards improving the legal framework and policy surrounding foreign investments, and the U.S. government is committed to providing further technical assistance and supporting responsible investments, adhering to the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility.
4. The conference sees the importance of the success of ongoing ceasefire negotiations before 2015 elections; the need for constitutional reform for the 2015 elections to be free and fair; and that these conditions and the implementation of the elections will be measured as a barometer for the country's commitment to democracy, transparency, and human rights.
5. The conference identified lack of capacity in the country as a significant challenge; therefore, the conference calls for further support in an effort to increase resources that invest in people and education through economic development that builds local institutional capacity and fosters freedom and more equitable prosperity.
6. The conference reaffirmed the understanding that only continued and constructive engagement and inclusive dialogue among the stakeholders inside—including political parties and ethnic armed organizations—with the support and participation of expatriates and the international community will help the country reach national reconciliation, sustained peace, and prosperity in Myanmar in the long-term. ■

ဘုံနားလည်သဘောတူညီချက်ရရှိခြင်း ကြေညာချက် အမေရိကန်-မြန်မာဆက်ဆံရေး နီးနှောဖလှယ်ပွဲ ညီလာခံ မေလ ၂၉ ရက်၊ ၂၀၁၅

အမေရိကန်-မြန်မာဆက်ဆံရေး နီးနှောဖလှယ်ပွဲ ညီလာခံကို အင်ဒီယာနာတက္ကသိုလ် (အိုင်ယူပီယူအိုင်)၊ အင်ဒီယာနာပိုးလစ်၌ ၂၀၁၅ ခုနှစ် မေလ ၂၉ ရက်နေ့တွင် အောင်မြင်စွာ ကျင်းပနိုင်ခဲ့သည်။

အစိုးရအရာရှိများ၊ ပညာရှင်များ၊ စီးပွားရေးနှင့် လူမှုအသင်းအဖွဲ့အစည်း ခေါင်းဆောင်များ၊ အမေရိကန်နှင့် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမှ တာဝန်ရှိသူများ၊ စုစုပေါင်း (၁၅၀) ခန့် တက်ရောက်ခဲ့ကြသည်။ မြန်မာသံအမတ်ကြီးဦးကျော်တင်မှ အဓိကမိန့်ခွန်းကို ပြောကြားသည်။ နိဗ္ဗာန်ဆရာတော် ဒေါ်အောင်ဆန်းစုကြည်မှ အထူးပီဒီယိုမိန့်ခွန်း ပေးပို့ခဲ့သည်။ ယူအက်စ်အေအိုင်ဒီ (USAID) မြန်မာ မစ်ရှင်အကြီးအကဲ ခရစ်စ် မီလီဂင် မှ အမေရိကန်-မြန်မာဆက်ဆံရေး တကယ့်အခြေအနေကို ထင်ဟပ်သည့် မိန့်ခွန်းကို audio အသံမှတစ်ဆင့် ပို့ပေးခဲ့သည်။

အရေးပါသည့် အရေးအရာများကို ဆန်းစစ်ရန်အပြင် အနာဂတ်အတွက် အခွင့်အလမ်းများ၊ ထိရောက်သည့် ဆွေးနွေး ပြောဆိုမှု တိုးမြှင့်စေရန်အတွက် ကွန်ဖရင့်၏ ပင်နယ်ဆွေးနွေးပွဲသုံးခုမှ - မြန်မာနိုင်ငံအကြောင်း ဝေဖန်သိရှိစေခြင်း၊ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံနှင့် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံထဲတွင် စီးပွားရေးလုပ်ငန်းနှင့် နိုင်ငံရေးနှင့်ဥပဒေဆိုင်ရာ ပြုပြင်ပြောင်းလဲရေးဖြစ်စဉ် (လက်ရှိနှင့် အနာဂတ်) တို့ကို ရွက်ဆောင်ခဲ့သည်။ တနေ့တာ ပင်တိုင်ဆွေးနွေးသူများနှင့် တက်ရောက်သူများမှ နက်ရှိုင်းသည့် ပြောဆိုဆွေးနွေးမှုများအပြီး ခေါင်းစဉ်များအလိုက် ကွန်ဖရင့်မှ အောက်ပါဘုံသဘောတူညီချက်များကို ရရှိခဲ့ပေသည်။

၁။ ညီလာခံမှ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ ရှုထောင့်သည့် တိုင်းရင်းသားပဋိပက္ခပေါ်တွင် အခြေခံသည့် နိုင်ငံရေးသဘာဝပြဿနာကို အသိအမှတ်ပြုပြီး မြန်မာစစ်တပ်မှ ပြုပြင်ပြောင်းလဲရေးကိုအစပျိုးလျက် သမတဦးသိန်းစိန်အစိုးရမှ အကောင်အထည် ဖော်နေသည်ကို နားလည်အသိအမှတ်ပြုသည်။

၂။ အမေရိကန်၏ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံနှင့် ဆက်ဆံရေးနှင့် ဤအရှေ့တောင်အာရှနိုင်ငံသို့ သွင်ပြင်များစွာပါရှိသည့် ချဉ်းကပ်မှု၊ ထိုတိုင်းပြည်အပေါ် ပစ်မှတ်ထားသည့် ဒဏ်ခံပိတ်ဆို့မှု၊ တပြိုင်နက်တည်းတွင် ရှေ့ဆက်မည့် ဒီမိုကရေစီ ဖြစ်ထွန်းရေးနှင့် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအတွက် စက်ယန္တရားများ ချက်ဆက်ခြင်းနှင့် အဖွဲ့အစည်းများကို ထောက်ပံ့အားပေး မှုများရှိနေခြင်းကို နားလည်အသိအမှတ်ပြုသည်။

၃။ ရေရှည်တွင် အမေရိကန်နှင့် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသားများ နှစ်ဦးနှစ်ဖက် အကျိုးများစေမည်ဟု မျှော်လင့်ချက်ဖြင့် အသင့်အတင့် များစွာသော အမေရိကန်ကုမ္ပဏီများမှ တိုင်းပြည်ထဲတွင် လုပ်ကိုင်ဆောင်ရွက်နေကြသည်ကို ကွန်ဖရင့်မှ နားလည်သည်။ ဥပဒေရေးရာများ နိုင်ငံခြားရင်းနှီးမြှုပ်နှံမှုတို့မှာ များပြားလှသည့် ထပ်ချည်းတလဲဖြစ်မှုများနောက်တွင်လည်း သိသာသော ရင်ဆိုင်စရာများအဖြစ် ဆက်လက်ရှိနေကြောင်း သဘောပေါက်သည်။ မြန်မာအစိုးရအနေဖြင့် နိုင်ငံခြား ရင်းနှီးမြှုပ်နှံမှု ဆိုင်ရာဥပဒေနှင့် ပေါ်လစီပြုပြင်ပြောင်းလဲရေးကို ရွက်ဆောင်နေပြီး၊ အမေရိကန်အစိုးရမှာ လိုအပ်သော နည်းပညာဆိုင်ရာ အထောက်အကူများပေးအပ်ရန်နှင့် သင့်လျော်သည့် ရင်းနှီးမြှုပ်နှံမှုများကို ကော်ပိုရိတ် ဆိုရှယ်တာဝန်ရှိခြင်းများမူနဲ့အညီ ထောက်ပံ့ရန် အာမခံဆုံးဖြတ်ပြီးဖြစ်သည်။

၄။ အရေးကြီးသော ၂၀၁၅ တွင်ကျင်းပမည့် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲမတိုင်မီ အပစ်အခတ်ရပ်စဲရေး သဘောတူညီမှုအတွက် ဆွေးနွေးပွဲများ၏ အောင်မြင်လာမှု၏ အရေးပါမှု၊ ၂၀၁၅ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲသည် တရားမျှတ၍ လွတ်လပ်သော ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ ဖြစ်စေရန် ဖွဲ့စည်းအုပ်ချုပ်ပုံ အခြေခံဥပဒေပြင်ဆင်ရန်လိုအပ်ချက်၊ ထို့ပြင် ထိုလိုအပ်ချက်များနှင့် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကျင်းပခြင်းတို့အား ဒီမိုကရေစီရေး၊ ပွင့်လင်းမြင်သာမှုရှိခြင်းနှင့် လူ့အခွင့်အရေးများအတွက် တိုင်းပြည်၏ သန္နိဋ္ဌာန်ချထားမှုကို တိုင်းတာသည့် ဘာရိုမီတာ အဖြစ် ကွန်ဖရင့်မှ မှတ်ယူသည်။

၅။ လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်စွမ်းအားနည်းခြင်းမှာ သိသာသည့် ရင်ဆိုင်စရာတစ်ခုအဖြစ် ညီလာခံမှအသိအမှတ်ပြုသည်။ သို့အတွက် တာရှည်ခံမည့် ဒီမိုကရေစီအသိုင်းအဝိုင်းနှင့် ဆက်လက်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအတွက်လိုအပ်သော ခေတ်မီသောလူ့အဖွဲ့အစည်း

ဖြစ်ထွန်းပေါ်ပေါက်လာနိုင်ရေးအတွက် လူထုပိုင်းနှင့်ပညာရေးပိုင်းတွင် ရင်းနှီးမြှုပ်နှံ မှုများ ပိုမိုရွက်ဆောင်ပေးရန် ညီလာခံမှ တောင်းဆိုသည်။
ဤသို့လုပ်ကိုင်ဆောင်ရွက်အကူအညီ ပို့ပေးမှသာလျှင် နိုင်ငံအတွင်းလုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်စွမ်းအား မြင့်တက်လာပြီး အဆုံးတွင် ပိုမိုအဓိပ္ပယ် ရှိသောလွတ်လပ်မှုနှင့် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးရရှိနိုင်မည်ဖြစ်ပေသည်။

၆။ ညီလာခံမှ နားလည်သည်မှာ ဆက်လက်ပြီး အပြုသဘောဆောင်သည့် ဆက်စပ်မှုနှင့် ပြည်တွင်းတွင် နိုင်ငံရေး ပါတီများ၊ လက်နက်ကိုင်တိုင်းရင်းသား အဖွဲ့အစည်းများ၊ လူမှုအသင်းအဖွဲ့အစည်းများဖြစ်ကြသည့် သက်ဆိုင်သူများ၊ ပါဝင်သည့် ဆွေးနွေးမှုနှင့် နိုင်ငံတကာရောက်နေသောမြန်မာအသိုင်းအဝိုင်းများနှင့် နိုင်ငံတကာအသိုင်းအဝိုင်းတို့မှ ထောက်ပံ့မှုနှင့်ပါဝင်ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်မှု သည်သာလျှင် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရေရှည်အတွက် အမျိုးသားသင့်မြတ်ရေး၊ တာရှည်ခံ ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးနှင့်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးရရှိနိုင်မည်ဟုနားလည်မှုကို ခိုင်မာယုံကြည်ထားကြောင်း တပ်လောင်းဖော် ပြအပ်ပါသည်။

အယ်နီ အမ် ဂေးလ်မာ၊ ယူအက်စ် ကုန်သွယ်ရေးဌာန၊ ဒေါက်တာ နီကိုလပ်စ် ဖယ်ရာလေ၊ ဩစတေးလျ အမျိုးသား တက္ကသိုလ်၊ ဒယ်နီ ကေး၊ ယူအက်စ်အေအိုင်ဒီ၊ အေးစန္ဒာလွင်၊ ပြည်ထောင်စုမြန်မာနိုင်ငံသံရုံး၊ ဝါရှင်တန် ဒီစီ၊ ဂျေး မာတင်၊ ယူအက်စ်-အာဖီယန် စီးပွားရေးကောင်စီ၊ ဟန်ယန်ဝေ၊ ဥရောပ-မြန်မာ ရုံး၊ ဒေါက်တာ နယ်ရင်ပေါင် ကစ်ဂင်တို့မှ ပင်တိုင် ဆွေးနွေးသူများအဖြစ် ပါဝင်ခဲ့ကြသည်။ ■

ဆက်သွယ်ရန်၊ အေလိုက်ဆာ ဟနီး
အမှုဆောင် ညွှန်ကြားရေးမှူး
မြန်မာ အမေရိကန် လူမှုအသင်းအဖွဲ့အစည်း
ဖုန်း ၈၁၂-၉၂၉-၇၁၉၃၊ အီးမေးလ် velaisa@umail.iu.edu



Photo L to R: Genevieve Pritchard, IU Office of International Development, Erin Biel, BACI, Anne M. Gillman, H.E. U Kyaw Tin, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Republic of Myanmar to the United Nations Dr. Nicholas Farrelly, Australian National University, Dany Khy, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Aye Sanda Lwin, Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Washington, D.C., Jay Martin, US-ASEAN Business Council, Jane Gehlhausen, Office of Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Dr. Nehginpao Kipgen, Harn Yawngnwe, Euro-Burma Office, Elaisa Vahnne, BACI, Vicki Dickson, IU Institute for International Business, Institute of Christine Davis, IU CIBER.

Myanmar's Elections: A Historic Opportunity for Change

By Salai Elaisa Vahnje

Editor's Note: Burma (or Myanmar) held the first ever openly contested general election in recent memory on Nov. 8, and the poll was widely viewed as free and credible where Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party National League for Democracy won a landslide victory, taking 886 parliamentary seats nationwide.

To ensure the peaceful power transition and continued cooperation towards genuine democracy in the country, and as part of her priority for national reconciliation in a country that had been plagued by ethnic armed conflict for more than half a century, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi afterwards met with President U Thein Sein, the House Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, the Country's Commander-in-Chief Sen-Gen. Min Aung Hlaing as well as former dictator Sen-Gen. Than Shwe, who is believed to be still wielding his influence over the military and the presidential major decisions. The Author hopes that Daw Suu will continue to send a very clear message of national reconciliation, especially to the military leadership to completely eliminate antagonism for possible fear of retribution, re-establish a strong bond and unfathomable trust, as well as prioritize reaching negotiated political settlement among the Burman and non-Burman ethnic armed groups.

This weekend's general elections represent a first competitive poll in 25 years in Myanmar (also known as Burma), with a total of 1163 seats up for grabs. The elections are a test for President Thein Sein and the Burmese military, who have the opportunity to demonstrate that they have the commitment and political will to help move the country forward to democracy and fundamental change.

Sworn into office in March 2011, President Thein Sein's government has taken some remarkable steps towards change: opening up to the international community, including an effort to normalize diplomatic ties with the West, and inviting foreign investors following decades of isolation from the global economy. While this effort has produced some real successes, the apparent initial openness has been followed by various restrictions, with the result that Myanmar still ranks among the worst countries in the world in which to do business. Concerns that the country's new market opportunities have been moving into the direction of mostly benefiting just a small privileged elite and their cronies have been corroborated by [recent revelations](#) by Global Witness on the \$31 billion jade trade.

Domestically, some reforms are very much in evidence: Political prisoners have been released; the media has been relaxed; civil society organizations, unions, and political parties have been allowed to form. However, a number of journalists have been arrested; student protests that sought education reform were crushed with force and many were imprisoned; and persistent military offensives against ethnic minorities have been launched. Even now, clashes continue in several areas, traumatizing and displacing thousands of civilians. This reflects both the policies of the present government and a broader political crisis that is deeply rooted in ethnic conflict. Weighed carefully, it is hard to conclude that in sum the indications point to anything other than backsliding.

The peace process—formally launched on August 18, 2011, encompassed nearly three years of talks with more than nine formal negotiations between the Government's Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC) and the ethnic armed organizations' Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT). Although it produced some noteworthy achievements in the initial stages, ultimately only eight of more than twenty ethnic armed groups [signed the so-called Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement](#) (NCA) on October 15, 2015, well short of the nationwide agreement that was sought.

The non-signatories refused to ink the agreement after the government rejected all-inclusive participation. This was despite the ethnic minorities making significant concessions earlier in the process: non-disintegration of the union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and the perpetuation of national sovereignty (the three main national causes set by the former military regime).

If Myanmar were to move in the direction of the envisaged second Panlong conference and negotiated political agreement, the process will need to be inclusive, open, equal, and democratic.

As for the legislature, while adding insignificant provisions and making peripheral laws were allowed, any amendments that would change the country fundamentally were effectively vetoed by the lawmakers from the armed forces bloc.

The Constitution still grants the military a quarter of all seats, while any substantial change requires more than 75 percent under the present constitutional design. In other words, Myanmar is as it was in 2008.

When it became apparent that approach individual members of Parliament from the military was not possible, as they talk their orders directly from the commander-in-chief, democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi proposed quadripartite talks, to include Thein Sein, house speaker Shwe Mann, and the military's Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing. Parliament meanwhile suggested six-party talks. However, the president rejected both offers, and instead hosted meetings involving the 14 parties and then an even larger gathering of 48 stakeholders. Neither format allowed any serious or substantive discussions.

Still, Myanmar wants democracy. How might that happen?



Sen-Gen. Min Aung Hlaing and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seen before their meeting on Dec. 2. Photo: EPA

Essentially, three things have to happen if the people of Myanmar are to enjoy true democracy. First, the Sunday's elections must be free and credible, and the will of the people expressed through the elections must be fully respected by the acceptance of the results.

Second, the NCA must be implemented in an all-inclusive process. And third, Constitutional reform must proceed

So this begins with elections that are unmarred by further violence, coercion, or intimidation, with the results respected.

Then, the NCA must be implemented with a good-faith, a sincere political will and solution-oriented approach. The military has a crucial role to play: opening up the process, working with the new government in recreating a space for all, including the non-signatories of the October 15 pact, and working together in molding the complexities into a simple federalist democracy, all within a reasonable timeframe.

Finally, the 2008 Constitution must be amended. Why? Simply put, it is undemocratic.

Evidence strongly suggests that independence hero Aung San did not intend to form the type of successive regimes that misruled the country for more than 60 years when he founded and led the Burma Independence Army (BIA), its members immortalized in the Bama or Burman nationalist mythology. The pre-independence Burman nationalistic movement was the means used to achieve independence. The subsequent implementation of that policy by Nu's government, and the 1962 coup, which principally stemmed from a desire to protect the Bama chauvinistic interests from the influence of South Asians (the Burmans see them as second colonists), were a direct result of the misinterpretation of Aung San's political strategies and goals.

The counterproductive outcome was the formation of the Karen National Union and the Kachin Independence Organization. Myanmar must be rebuilt through economic strength based on democratic foundations. This will happen only when the necessary constitutional reforms are made (amending articles claimed to have been drafted on the basis of fear of foreign powers and the charter that gives the military an effective veto).

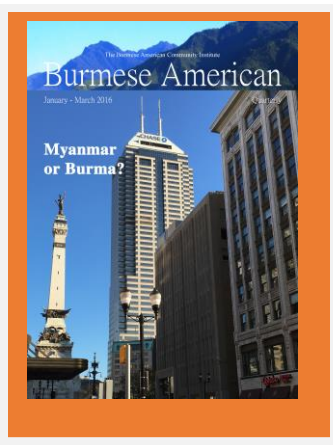
To eliminate antagonism and possible fear of retribution, which could be taken as reason to cause instability and revert to the "dark days," Nobel laureate and main opposition party leader Aung San Suu Kyi has throughout the campaign in recent weeks openly reiterated that she would prioritize national reconciliation and ethnic harmony by working together with the military, holding no grudges.

That leaves the post-election period offering a historic opportunity for Myanmar, and the onus is on President Thein Sein and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to ensure that the country moves forward to federalist democracy. In doing so, they would leave a distinctive legacy for Myanmar and its people. ■



Members of the Board of Directors: Posed at the end of year meeting on December 12. L-R sitting: Dr. Bruce Ray, Rev. Robert Biak Cung (Treasurer), Dr. Ro Dinga (Chairman), Pu San Hlei Thang (Vice Chairman), Pu Zapeng Sakhong (Advisor), Bonnie Kane, Fiorella (Fio) Gambetta-Gibson, Elaisa Vahnje (Executive Director), Pi Nguncer Bualteng, Ko Khaing Kyaw Kyaw. Missing: Daw Ruby Sing (Secretary), Pu Lian Cin, Dr. Fengyi Kuo, Pu U Jeru, Rev. Thang Mang, and David Labya.

BACI Advisory Board: Rev. Dr. Stephen Kio, Rev. Dr. Val Thang, Pu Zapeng Sakhong, Matthew P. Schomburg, Indiana State Refugee Coordinator and Executive Outreach Director, Leslie Lenkowsky, Clinical Professor of Public Affairs and Philanthropic Studies at Indiana University, David Williams, John S. Hastings Professor of Law and Director, Center for Constitutional Democracy, Indiana University. ■



The Cover Story

Front: Downtown Indianapolis tall buildings rising in the early morning sun-light adjoining Victoria Mountains of the Chin Hills, Burma.

Back: BACI Upward College Summer Scholars Program researchers during the leadership and education trip – the students posed at Lake Michigan, with Chicago Downtown background.

Photos: BACI & IRIN

Graphic Design: David Vabie Hnanga

Upcoming Events - 2016



Celebrating Service & Diversity – June 20, 2016

In conjunction with World Refugee Day, the Burmese American Community Institute (BACI) and its partners in Central Indiana will come together and Celebrate Service & Diversity in Indiana, promote volunteerism and participation, as well as honor the courage and resilience of millions of refugees around the world. As part of the celebration, the participants will be engaging in the “Giving Back to Community” project by performing volunteer and community service at Indy Acre Farm and the Tree Planting Project. An essay contest on the topic of “The Importance of Community and Volunteer Service” will also be conducted.

Contact: 317-731-5537; Email: info@baci-indy.org.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

BACI's Upward College Program will observe Martin Luther King Day on **Monday, January 18, 2016**.

“I Have a Dream” speech delivered by the King will be screened. The participants will have a chance to reflect, compare, and contrast the issue of civil rights in America with that of Burma where ethnic conflicts have persisted for more than half a century.

You are cordially invited. For more information, please contact us at:

info@baci-indy.org; or 317-731-5537.

THE 5TH ANNUAL YOUTH & COLLEGE SUMMIT

Colleges, Universities, Organizations and Community members will be holding the Annual Youth and College Summit on Saturday, July 30, 2016, from 9:00am to 5:00pm, hosted by BACI. At the event, the summer scholars will present their research findings with policy and solution recommendations on issues that are facing our society. This forum is designed for all the stakeholders to experience, share, and learn more about the challenges and opportunities in the communities and promote higher education. For further information, please contact us at: info@baci-indy.org; or 317-731-5537.

Nutrition Class Offered by Franciscan St. Francis Health hosted at BACI

Place: BACI Center; 4925 Shelby Street, SUITE 200
Indianapolis, IN 46227

Date: February 9, 2016; 9-11AM; Classes are held throughout the year. More dates TBA.

Contact:

Abigail Emerick

Franciscan St. Francis Outpatient Nutrition Services, Ph: 317-528-7540; Or
Lian Sang (Nge Nge), Burmese American Community Institute, Ph: 317-731-5537.



BACI Center

4925 Shelby Street #200

Indianapolis, IN 46227

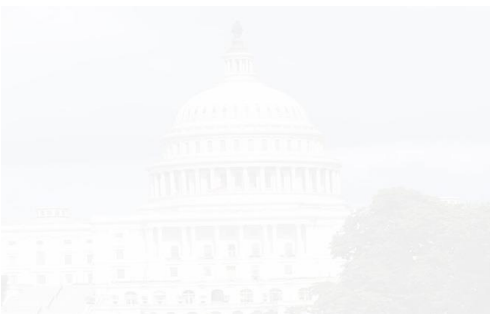
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BACI

Burmese American Community Institute

Advocating • Connecting • Educating • Serving



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The Burmese American Community Institute (BACI) is a non-profit organization that provides social services, educational and vocational support to the Burmese in greater Indianapolis. The BACI also support community members regionally, nationally, and globally through collaborative initiatives, strategic partnerships, and advocacy.

