

# ADRA Myanmar

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## KENNETH H. SUANZANANG

Kenneth H. Suanzanang worked as a teacher, evangelist, ordained pastor, school principal, ADRA director, district administrator, mission president, and union communication/public affairs and religious liberty/legal director. He retired in 2009. His wife, Lian Za Dim, and their three children live in Yangon, Myanmar. Suanzanang continues to be active in his church. Under Suanzanang's leadership, a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Health and ADRA was signed on July 20, 1993, and the Declaration of Ownership of Trade Marks of the Adventist Church—the logo and typeface—was registered on August 28, 2007. He received an Award of Merit from Adventist World Radio in December 2009 and the General Conference Communication Department's NET Award in May 2011. Suanzanang has written one book, *The Gospel Echo from Genesis*.

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The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Myanmar is a government recognized NGO in Myanmar. Established in 1984, ADRA Myanmar has provided development and relief assistance throughout the country.

Location: The head office is located at A3-2E Shine Condominium, #4 North Bazaar Road, Dagon 11191, Yangon. It is just a five-minute walk south of Shwe Dagon Pagoda, a ten-minute walk north of Bogyoke Aung San's Market, and a few meters east of Myanmar Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (MYUM) headquarters.

The Mission Statement reads: "ADRA Myanmar works with people in poverty and distress in order to create just and positive change through empowering partnerships and responsible action."

## History

The name of SAWS was changed to Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in 1983. On July 11, 1984, ADRA Myanmar was organized with Ephraim Han as the first country director.<sup>1</sup> He served until March 31, 1990.

First Term: During Han's period of service, four service wells and four latrines were installed with \$19,225 funded by ADRA International and two service wells with \$4,600 granted by ADRA Japan in two states and three regions.<sup>2</sup> On December 12, 1989, Kenneth Htang Suanzanang was elected as the next country director, beginning March 31, 1990.<sup>3</sup> Prior to 1990, ADRA Myanmar was unknown to the military government.

Second Term: The second term was led by Ken Suanzanang from April 1, 1990 to December 31, 1991. On April 24, an official delegation from ADRA Far East, composed of Dr. Ottis C Edwards, board chairman, as well as president of the Far Eastern Division of Seventh-day Adventists; Dr. Maitland DiPinto, regional director, and Ken Suanzanang, visited Colonel Dr. Pe Thein, minister of the Ministry for Health and Education to discuss how ADRA could take part in the development of Myanmar.<sup>4</sup> Visiting the headquarters of Fire Brigade, ADRA was informed that "the greatest disaster in Myanmar is fire." It was accurate until Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008.

On January 21, 1991, Dr. DiPinto, Cynthia DiPinto (nurse), Dr. Gordon Bullock, co-chair of ADRA Far East, and Paul and Dawn Dulhunty of ADRA Nepal, accompanied by Ken Suanzanang, visited Yenantha Leprosy Hospital, 30 miles east of Mandalay. After a proposal was drafted, they paid an official visit to Colonel Dr. Pe Thein on January 28, 1991.<sup>5</sup>

On May 27, 1991, ADRA personnel—Ba Khin, chairman; Ken Suanzanang; and Ba Hla Thein and Do Hen Pau, board members, donated for the Meiktila Fire recovery.<sup>6</sup>

From June 12 to 19, Dr. John F Sipkens, the new regional director visited Myanmar. Sipkens visited leprosy hospital and Major General Tun Kyi, commander of the Central Command. On

June 13, 1991, Sipkens also donated for Meiktila Fire recovery.<sup>7</sup> On June 14, 1991, Sipkens paid his first official visit to Dr. Pe Thein.<sup>8</sup>

From October 6 to 13, Sipkens paid his second official visit to Myanmar and brought with him a prosthesis expert, Mr. Rajarathnam, from Singapore. Materials and equipment for the National Rehabilitation Hospital and the Yenantha Leprosy Hospital were handed over to Dr. Maung Kyaw, Director General of the Department of Health (DOH).<sup>9</sup> Sipkens paid a visit to Dr. Pe Thein on October 11, 1991.<sup>10</sup>

Third Term: 1992 to 1996: On June 23, the Director General of Water Utilization Department issued an order to give technical assistance for water supply by gravity flow at Hiangzing, Tiddim Township, Chin State.

In December 1992 Dr. Sipkens, accompanied by Dr. Shozo Tabuchi, Director of the Far Eastern Division Education Department and Ken Suanzanang visited Rear Admiral Than Nyunt, the new minister for the Ministry of Health and Education.

## ADRA Paves Way for World Church Leaders to Visit Myanmar in 1993

On July 19, 1993, Dr. Robert Folkenberg, chairman of the ADRA International Board as well as president of the world Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Dr. Ralph Watts Jr., president of ADRA International, and Dr. John F. Sipkens, regional director, visited Myanmar. It was the first ever visit to the country by an ADRA president and the second by a General Conference president. The first visit of a GC president took place in 1915.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by John F. Sipkens and Dr. Hla Myint, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Health on July 20, 1993. The Ministry of Religious Affairs helped to import a drilling machine and six vehicles. Bales of clothing and boxes of medicine were imported by the Ministry of Health.

On December 12, 1993, everyone was surprised to see Dr. Sipkens, Ruth Sipkens, and Dr. Thomman, Associate Director for the Education Department of the Far Eastern Division at the Kalaymyo Airport. The Medical Superintendent of Kalay District Hospital and head of the Education Department of Chin State met them at the airport to accompany them wherever they went. The civil and military intelligence had many questions, but a

document from the Ministry of Health answered the questions. They visited schools, hospitals, and the Hiangzing Water Project.

On June 23, 1994, John Howard, director of ADRA Canada, Dr. Sipkens, Pastor Fujita, director of ADRA Japan, Warren Scale, associate director, and technical consultants from the Asia-Pacific Division, Peter and Betty Cooper, and Ken Suanzanang and wife, were welcomed by the Hiangzing community. A microhydro generator was funded by Asia-Pacific Division for the Hiangzing village. The Myanmar government allowed ADRA-Myanmar to open a Foreign Currency Bank Account on July 4, 1994.

On March 28, 1995, Fred Harder, CEO of the Paradise Valley Hospital and a member of the Adventist Health System/West came to evaluate the Lezang Water Project by gravity flow.

On February 22, 1996, the agreement for the long expected \$100,920 hydroelectric project for Thuklai, granted by the Japanese Grass-root Grant Assistance, was signed by Mr. Yoichi Yamaguchi, the ambassador of Japan, and Ken Suanzanang, Director of ADRA-Myanmar.

## Third Term Projects - from 1992 to 1996

Yenantha Leprosy Hospital: In 1995 bales of clothing were donated as follows: 350 from ADRA International and 400 from ADRA Korea, and 400 blankets from ADRA Asia-Pacific. ADRA Sweden funded US\$37,280 for water, equipment, and for training—a reconstructive surgeon trained in Ethiopia, two nurses for physiotherapy in Bangladesh, a leper shoemaker in Nepal and India, two prosthesis workers at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Yangon, and 30 women as professional tailors at the hospital. ADRA Sweden also funded \$15,854 to uplift students at Mandalay. A 12-seat Nissan van was donated by ADRA Japan. A leper shoe center and a prosthesis workshop were established. ADRA Sweden's fund of \$9,146 could not complete the Prosthesis Workshop, so ADRA requested \$3,875 from Lt. General Tun Kyi, minister of the Ministry of Trade.

National Rehabilitation Hospital: ADRA Sweden and ADRA International funded US\$3,333 and \$5,000 respectively for prosthesis equipment and material for the hospital. A technical consultant was brought in from abroad so that unnecessary amputations were prevented. Ms. Rigmor Nyberg, the country director of ADRA Sweden visited twice. Beneficiaries included 2,500 people.

Children's Hospital in Yangon: The Adventist Health System/West funded \$10,000 to install a Burn Unit Center. The Inter-Church Medical Association Incorporation through AHS/West donated 65 boxes of medicines valued at US\$419,926 (shipping excluded). Beneficiaries included 7,000 people.

Three Other Hospitals: ADRA International funded \$3,000 for the water system for Myaungmya District Hospital. ADRA Japan donated a nine-seat Nissan Van. Other beneficiaries included Kalaymyo District Hospital and Thuklai Station Hospital where water systems were improved. Beneficiaries include 4,000 people.

Water Supply by Gravity Flow: ADRA Canada funded Hiangzing water, C\$22,936, and Chin water for seven villages in Falam and Matupi townships, US\$25,354. AHS/West funded Lezang and Zampi water, US\$9,285. Beneficiaries included 6,000 people.

Tube Well and Pond Project: ADRA Japan donated a drilling machine (\$5,000) which was duty-exempted by the government. ADRA Japan donated six vehicles duty free. Tube wells were drilled in the Southeast and Delta areas. Seventy tube wells were drilled in Delta by Australia Embassy's donation of \$5,000 which benefitted 7,000 people. To acquire potable water, a pond was constructed at Myate village in Rakhine. AHS/West funded K60,000 that benefitted 1,200 people.

The heart team of Loma Linda University Medical Center led by Dr. Joyce Hopp came twice in 1994-95, with a budget of US\$ 500,000 and a donation \$300,000 worth of equipment. Dr. Joan Coggins led the team in training 180 doctors and nurses. Beneficiaries were 10,000 people.

Other Projects: Southeast Adventist Seminary Agriculture, \$3,000 donated by Asia-Pacific Division; Insein Community Health Promoter's Training Course, \$4,375 donated by Japanese Embassy; Insein Sakhantha Clinic, \$3,047, and Small Enterprise Poultry Project, \$5,500, donated by ADRA Japan; Ten Disaster Response, K1,200,000; 200 bicycles for Immunization Project in Mandalay Division, \$10,000 donated by Adventist Health System/West; computer lab in Yangon, \$16,563, Snake Bite Control, \$34,328, and Physiotherapy for Mayanchaung Leprosy Community, \$16,329, donated by ADRA Canada. Beneficiaries were 12,000 people.

Summary from 1984 to 1996: Despite limited funding and few donors, ADRA Myanmar served the country in four states—Chin, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, and four regions—Ayeyarwady, Magwe, Mandalay, and Yangon, in the sectors of sustainable livelihood, education, health and nutrition, emergency response.<sup>11</sup>

## The Greatest Disappointment for ADRA:

On May 29, 1996, Ken Flemmer, regional director of ADRA Asia-Pacific and Stephano, director of ADRA Japan, and Ken Suanzanang, country director, landed in Kalaymyo via Mandalay. They planned to visit the proposed Thuklai Hydro Project at Thuklai, Tiddim township; but when Dr. Oke Soe of the Department of Health who accompanied them reported to the Regional Military Office, the command was to wait in Kalaymyo until further order came from the Ministry of Defense Intelligence Department. The ADRA group had entered Chin State three times: in December 1993, June 1994, and March 1995. They did not expect to be prevented from entering. A Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with the Ministry of Health in 1993. Expectation was very high. They were greatly disappointed when they were ordered to return to Yangon. Later it was learned that foreigners were not allowed to enter Chin State which had the highest poverty rate (73 percent) as per the figures released from the first official survey.<sup>12</sup>

Partners and Donors

Asian Development Bank, ADRA Australia, ADRA Canada, ADRA Germany, ADRA International, ADRA Japan, ADRA New Zealand, ADRA Norway, ADRA UK, AEON% Club Foundation, AusAID, Child's Dream, ECHO, GAC-IHA, GBG, HELP International, MFAT, MoFA, Mott Macdonald, NORAD

## Role and Place in Myanmar

Out of 14 states and regions in Myanmar, ADRA Myanmar works through sub offices to deliver projects to 11 states and regions within the technical sectors of Sustainable Livelihoods, Education, Health and Nutrition, and Emergency Response.

ADRA Myanmar seeks to develop partnerships with rural communities, country authorities, donors, and partner offices within the ADRA network. We believe that honest and authentic relationships lead to harmonious partnerships which are based on natural respect and fairness. Within this environment, partnership mobilizes demand-driven funds to assist those in need to realize their potential and become active partners of progress.

ADRA Myanmar was known as a dependable NGO by the Military Government when Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar; the catastrophic destruction resulted in at least 138,000 fatalities. Labutta township alone reported to have 80,000 dead, with about 10,000 more deaths in Bogale. The damage was estimated at US\$10 billion.<sup>13</sup>

## Directors

Ephraim Han (1984-1990);<sup>14</sup> Kenneth H. Suanzanang (1990-1997);<sup>15</sup> Tember Chit (1997-2000);<sup>16</sup> Teddy Din (2000-2007);<sup>17</sup> Marcel Magner (2007-2008);<sup>18</sup> Brendon Irvine (2011-2015);<sup>19</sup> Claudio Sandoval Maitre (2015-)<sup>20</sup>

## Interim Directors

Doug Havens, (2008-2010);<sup>21</sup> Teddy Din, (2010-2011);<sup>22</sup> Min Lwin, (2011-2011)<sup>23</sup>

## Acting Director

Derek Glass, (2015-2015)<sup>24</sup>

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## NOTES

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