

OVERSEAS COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

OCA is the association through which we sponsor Biak Ruk Sang and have met Peter and the Rakhine Mission Band for Christ. OCA doesn't exist for itself, but for the cause of the church in the developing world. OCA began in 1987 when making disciples of all nations began to be seen with a new hue. A group of leaders were encouraged to see the state of the church in the developing world as it had come to be, not how it had been previously. Indigenous churches were growing, so the pressing need was for indigenous leaders to be raised up to lead those churches.

The earlier preference for training people in the west had often led to difficulties, but more positively in some cases, had meant that Bible colleges had been established with indigenous lecturers. These colleges needed help to put down roots into the local culture, and into the scriptures, yet few had the needed resources that were taken for granted in the West.

OCA's vision was to help strengthen these key evangelical Bible Colleges to fulfill their strategic goals. They desired to overcome the manifest problem of training people in the West who frequently did not then return to their home countries.

At first there was a focus on supporting students in a variety of colleges in Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. OCA expanded its support to include major projects such as land, buildings, library acquisitions and computers. A major development in recent years has been to provide study grants for faculty recognizing how important this is to building the quality of lecturers at our partner Bible Colleges so they can teach for their context. A sign of success of the OCA vision, along with other organisations, is that nearly all these higher degrees can be done within the regions of the developing world.

As the Bible colleges in the developing world become more sophisticated, they become more relevant. They improve their capacity to grow leaders who can minister effectively in their context. OCA is continuing to look to God to lead them in the best ways to assist their partner colleges to impact their countries and regions. Strategically, OCA support leading colleges in their particular regions with the intent that they will have a positive and significant impact on other colleges in the region, through deliberate partnerships with smaller institutions.

They are also developing the practice to assess graduates in the field to see if indeed what they have learnt in college has made any difference to the impact they are making in their churches and societies.

Often as minorities, the Christian church withdraws, but this impetus is towards positively influencing nations with the gospel of grace. This is envisaged as a more holistic contribution than just planting churches. As a handmaiden to the leading Bible colleges of the developing world, OCA will continue to assess how it contributes in financial ways so that these developing trends are supported.

OCA began its partnership with Myanmar Evangelical Graduate school of Theology in 2005. To date they have contributed \$430,400 towards apartments for staff and students, library and generator; \$100,600 towards faculty grants and \$377,000 towards student sponsorship. Across South East Asia, OCA sponsor 5 colleges and 629 students to date. Across this region 88% of the population is practicing Islam.