

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

Dear donor or sponsor,

This is already our twelfth progress report. Its subject is our work for the boys' and girls' orphanages in Minethouk in Myanmar (Burma) in 2013.

Political development in Burma

European sanctions against Burma were suspended in 2012 and abolished on 22 April 2013 in response to the positive political developments in Burma. European banks are not yet allowed to open branches in Burma, which means that it is very difficult to make non-cash payments from the West. Minister Ploumen (Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation) opened a Dutch trading office in Yangon in November 2013. It has been fifteen years since the Netherlands had an official presence in Burma. The Netherlands maintains diplomatic relations with Burma via the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bangkok and the Burmese Embassy in Brussels.

Board visit to the orphanages

The Board visited the orphanages in January and November 2013. In January, we bought and installed ten laptops. We were able to do this thanks to a donor's generous gift. The old computers were removed and given to the government school in Minethouk (the school where our children have their lessons). An internet connection was also installed in January 2013. So now the children can learn how to use the internet and access the entire world for the first time in their lives!

In November, the budget for the next three years was discussed with the staff and the annual meeting was held with the committee which oversees the orphanages. This committee advises the orphanages on matters of health, education and food, among other things. Additionally, a few members of the committee provide the children with tutoring. A great deal of attention was paid in our talks with various staff members to ways in which the standards of education could be raised.

In 2013, a water purification system was put into operation, the kitchen was partly remodeled so that cooking no longer takes place over open wood fires, and the sanitary facilities in the girls' orphanage were replaced.

Education

The general level of education in Burma is very poor. Primary education, which lasts for about 5 years, is officially compulsory. On average, this is completed by about 9 or 10 years of age. It can be followed by non-compulsory secondary education. Only 35-40% of Burmese children continue on to this level of schooling.

All the children in our orphanages go to secondary school. They attend the government school in Minethouk, a small village about a kilometer from the orphanage. Furthermore, all our children get extra tutoring after school.

The Board, accompanied by an educational expert from the Netherlands, visited the government school in Minethouk in 2013. We spoke to the school's administration. The purpose of this visit was to try to understand the nature of the lessons that the children were being given. As a result of this visit, we are going to develop a program in 2014 trying to improve the level of the tutoring in our orphanages. After that, we will look at whether it is possible to give the government school advice on how to improve its own standards of education.

We also visited a school in Mandalay to see if it was possible for a number of children from our orphanages to go there for vocational training. Unfortunately, this turned out not to be the case. We decided that we needed to provide this education ourselves.

Children who need to leave the orphanage on account of age (at about 17 years) and who want to continue their education, can ask us for a student grant. Five children made use of this opportunity in 2013. This fund has been provided for the most part through donations, but also through special fundraisers. For example, we hosted a farewell reception this year where we asked for no gifts other than financial contributions to the student grant fund.

Volunteers

In 2013, like in previous years, volunteers went to the orphanages to offer advice to the staff, give lessons, and supervise projects.

In February, a volunteer from Germany (Marianne) went and worked at the orphanage for four weeks. She gave English lessons, seeking in particular to improve the children's pronunciation. She also made a sort of handbook with useful tips for future volunteers.

In December, a volunteer from the Netherlands (Pascal) went and stayed at the orphanage for 2.5 weeks. Among other things, he gave the staff and children fire-safety training. He also bought and installed fire extinguishers and smoke alarms. Moreover, an additional ten computers were bought and installed. Now the orphanages have twenty new laptops. Pascal also gave English and IT lessons.

The staff and children of the orphanages are very pleased with the volunteers' commitment. In 2014, a few more volunteers will go to the orphanages. Because there are so many children in the two orphanages (95) with relatively few members of staff, volunteers can really make a difference to these children's lives. Our volunteers make a valuable contribution to the operation of our orphanages.

Activities in the Netherlands and in Spain

A fundraiser took place in December 2013 for the benefit of our foundation. For a period of 24 hours, twenty employees from the software company JEM-id in Honselersdijk (a place in the Netherlands) developed software for companies and offered them advice about the user-friendliness of their websites. The clients paid for the advice they received and the software company passed on to our foundation the wonderful sum of € 25.000 that they raised through this effort.

Furthermore, we held a number of anniversaries and farewell receptions where we asked for donations of money in the place of flowers or other gifts. All of the money was passed on to our foundation.

A photography exhibition was organized in Madrid, on Burma in general and our orphanages in particular. The money it raised was also passed on to our foundation.

Financial

We are able to provide the basic needs of life to our orphanages thanks to fixed periodic donations. The donations are comprised of food, housing, energy, education and clothing. We also pay staff salaries out of these funds.

Thanks to a few very generous donations from the USA, Switzerland, and Germany, the proceeds from various anniversaries and receptions, and the fundraiser, we also made a financial surplus in 2013. Furthermore, we recently received a message from a notary telling us that we are due to receive a legacy from an estate. This will be paid out to us in 2014.

Plans for the Coming Years

Thanks to large one-off donations, we will be able to carry out a few important projects over the next few years, which would otherwise have been impossible.

There is a serious lack of skilled labour in Burma. It is not possible to learn a trade in a school close to our orphanages. We are planning to build a sort of trade school next to the boys orphanage where our children can learn a trade. The idea is that children interested in this sort of thing can train to be carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, etc. We will try to recruit retired tradesmen as teachers.

There are eight major ethnic groups in Burma and more than a hundred subgroups. Each group has its own language, dress, food, and culture. There are children of nearly every one of the eight main ethnic groups in our orphanages. With the help of students, we want to look into which aspects and traditions of these groups could be interesting to highlight in an anthropological classroom. The idea is that this might be a way to familiarize our children with their own backgrounds, as well as those of the other children. We also plan to offer guided tours of the anthropological classroom conducted by the older children to the numerous tourists who visit the orphanages. We want to build this classroom next to the girls' orphanage. We also want to build an additional separate classroom next to the anthropological classroom. The whole building will be stylistically in keeping with the architecture of the entire complex.

Thanks

We are incredibly grateful for all the support that we have received in 2013 from you and all our donors, large and small, private and commercial, from churches, and volunteers. Thank you very much indeed!

The Board: (Fons Huijerman (Chairman), Anemoon van Dijk (Communications), Robert Schuil (Member), Gerrit Jan Muller (Member), Simon Goede (Treasurer/Secretary).

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