

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Dear donor or sponsor,

This is our fourteenth progress report since the establishment of our foundation in 2002. It concerns the developments in Burma in general and our work in 2015 for the boys' and girls' orphanage in Minethouk, Burma.

Developments in Burma

History was made in Burma in November 2015. After more than half a century of military dictatorship, democratic elections have been held for the first time and the result was accepted by the army. In theory the ball is now in the court of the leader of the opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi with her National League for Democracy (NLD). But currently, the military is still in charge. The army has a quarter of the seats in Parliament and remains in control of the important ministries of Defense and the Interior.

The constitution, which was altered by the military in 2008, determines that people who have relatives abroad cannot become president. Aung San Suu Kyi is the widow of a British man and has two sons who both have the British nationality and therefore cannot become president according to this constitution. It is yet unknown who will become the next president.

The young democracy in Burma is also under religious pressure. Burma is an ethnic patchwork with more than one hundred recognized ethnic groups. Most minorities live at the borders (particularly those with China and Thailand) of the country, far away from the political power center. That has already often led to armed uprisings against the central authority.

Currently, people are investing heavily in Burma; the economy grew with more than 8% in 2015. For example, Heineken opened a large brewery in Yangon in July of 2015. Close to our orphanages, at the edge of the Inle Lake, various hotels are being built. Thanks to the increase in tourism there is a significant need for staff in the tourist industry. Good staff in education is very scarce. The inflation was 12% in 2015 (for us that entails that the costs will increase significantly).

Our orphanages

Mid-2015, thirteen girls and eight boys left the orphanages because they had completed Secondary School, with or without a diploma. Seven new girls and four boys have since joined us. Presently, 55 girls and 31 boys live in the orphanages. 50% of these children were born within a 50 km radius of the orphanages and 50% beyond.

Seven children graduated from High School in Minethouk (grade 11) this year. Two of the seven have continued their studies at an agricultural school and one has started a study to become a nurse. Four of the graduates are temporarily working as volunteers in our girls' orphanage.

In July, our board member Hanny Kuiper visited the orphanages. She spent two weeks there and held several meetings with staff members and the orphanage father, in particular about education and the carrying out of minor repairs. She also made agreements in regards to the quality of the food of the children. Furthermore, she visited two other orphanages and an organization that is committed to Burmese refugees.

The small vocational school was completed in August 2015. It was opened in a typically Burmese manner, by letting dozens of students from Mandalay, whom were visiting our orphanages, spend two nights there. The intention is to provide carpentry lessons during the course of 2016.

Education and collaboration

There are three types of schools in Burma: the government school, the private school, and the monastery schools. All of our children attend the government school (combination of an elementary school and secondary school) in Minethouk, as there are no other schools in the vicinity of the orphanages. The Ministry of Education determines the educational system in these schools. Education, particularly at government schools, lags far behind the education in Western countries. Advice of third parties to improve the system are declined, friendly yet resolutely.

The tutoring given to all of our children is based on the official educational system in Burma and is therefore supportive of the government school in Minethouk.

The private and monastery schools have more freedom to develop their teaching programs. The education at these schools is therefore significantly better than those at the government schools, partly because of the use of foreign teachers.

In order to remain successful in the long term, in our opinion it is necessary to look for opportunities to collaborate with other orphanages or organizations that work in Burma. We are particularly thinking of the exchange of knowledge in the field of education and management.

The SWAN organization is committed to Burmese refugees in Thailand. We gave this organization a donation with which they can copy study books to educate Burmese refugees. Over time we hope to establish an exchange of knowledge in the field of education.

The Myitta Mon orphanage is located close to our orphanages. Approximately sixty children live in this orphanage. Mister Ohn Maung is the chairman of the committee which this orphanage is managed by. At the time he donated the land on which our two orphanages are built. As one of the sponsors of this orphanage has withdrawn, Mister Ohn Maung asked us to help sponsor this orphanage. The board has agreed to this and has decided to sponsor this orphanage for a fixed amount annually. It has been agreed that we will evaluate annually if we wish to continue this sponsorship. We believe that our orphanages will be able to benefit from this collaboration in time by drawing on each other's strong points.

Thanks to a substantial legacy that we received in 2014, we are able to finance these two collaborations.

Volunteers

At the beginning of this year, a couple from Switzerland (Simon and Hetty) has given email classes and lessons on textile applications, such as knitting and crocheting, to the children. Furthermore, Hetty has taken individual pictures of all of the children and made a magnificent collage out of them (see pages 5 and 6).

In August two students (Maureen and Cecil) from Belgium and France visited our orphanages and taught, amongst others, English and computer lessons. In addition, Cecil gave swimming lessons to the children in a lake close to the orphanages.

The board

Gerrit Jan Muller informed us in November of last year that he will be resigning from the board. We thank him for his tremendous efforts, initially as advisor, and later as a board member of our foundation.

Thanks

We are exceptionally grateful for all the support which we have received from you and all of the donors, large and small, privately and from charity funds, churches, and volunteers in 2015. Thank you very much!

The board: Fons Huijerman (chairman), Robert Schuil (member), Hanny Kuiper (member) and Simon Goede (secretary/treasurer).

Simon Goede
Secretary/Treasurer

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