

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Dear donor or sponsor,

This is the fifteenth progress report since our foundation was initiated in 2002. This report concerns the developments in Burma (Myanmar) in general and the activities in 2016 for the boys' and girls' orphanage in Minethouk, Burma.

Developments in Burma

In the eighties and nineties of the previous century, Burma was burdened by great poverty due to economic mismanagement under military rule and the many wars in the border regions. As a result, in addition to the monastic schools and orphanages, hundreds of private orphanages were founded for children who threatened to become the victims of poverty and war. In actuality, these private orphanages have taken over several of the government's primary tasks such as housing, education, healthcare and social security.

The victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) during the elections of November 2015 will bring about great change in Burma, both politically and economically. The military dictatorship has been replaced by a quasi-democratic government, the economic boycott has largely been lifted and steps have been made to improve the educational system. Therefore, it is expected that the Burmese government will gradually begin to take over the tasks of the orphanages the coming years.

There is an increasing need for human capital, which is why the Burmese government has made the revision of the educational system into a national priority. UNICEF collaborates closely with the new government in order to improve access and quality of education and protect children against violence, abuse and exploitation.

As a result of the lifted sanctions and increased tourism, the Burmese economy has significantly grown over these past years. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the country is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and growth percentages of approximately 8% are realised annually.

In October 2016, minister Koenders (Foreign Affairs) opened the Dutch embassy in Yangon. It is for the first time in nearly 50 years that the Netherlands has an embassy in Burma.

Nevertheless, the political and economic uncertainty in Burma is still immense. This makes it incredibly difficult to predict whether all changes can/will be implemented by the government and if yes, when. There are major problems regarding ethnic minorities, to which approx. 30-40% of the population belongs. Moreover, the expropriation of land from farmers in the outer districts is a ticking time bomb due to both domestic and foreign forces at play.

Despite these great uncertainties, Burma is slowly starting to find its way and people have hope for a better future.

Our orphanages

Currently, we have 43 girls and 30 boys in our orphanages, a total of 73 children. In 2015, there were a total of 86 children in our orphanages. This reduction is probably the result of the economic growth which means there is less poverty and less reason to bring the children to an orphanage. For example, in 2016 three girls were retrieved from our orphanage by their families and transferred to another school. These girls are now sponsored by acquaintances of the family.

Ten children sat for their final exam for the High School in 2016. Despite all the tutoring provided by our two teachers, only four out of the ten children passed. Two of these children have been given jobs in a hotel and two await placement at the Distance University. One of the latter two now works in our girls' orphanage as a volunteer and the other returned to her home village to attend to her mother during illness.

The two boys who graduated from the High School in 2015 still attend the (four-year) educational programme at the agricultural school in Heho. Out of the five girls who graduated from the High School in 2015, one is still studying in Taunggyi to become a nurse, and a second girl will start this programme in the second quarter of 2017. Three girls attend the Distance University in Taunggyi and also work in hotels awaiting further study. Nearly all children from the area of Inle Lake - especially the girls - only want one thing after graduating High School: to travel to a big city (Yangon or Mandalay) to work or study there.

In December, our adviser Maria Overmars visited the orphanages and had various conversations with the orphanage father and staff.

Volunteers

Volunteers visited the orphanages this year as well. For example, in February of this year, Boaz from Taiwan and his daughter Noa were there. They did a great job. Boaz gave the orphanages two so-called Raspberry Pi computers. These are very small computers that can be connected to a computer screen or a television screen without the usual problems the Internet entails such as advertising and websites with sexual content. The children can now use these to view children's Wikipedia for school and all manner of educational videos offline. Educational packages (in English) were also included, both for the teachers and the children.

Furthermore, Boaz and Noa organised various group discussions with the children. Moreover, they rearranged the library and provided the books with little stickers. The library contains over one hundred books, most of them donated by visitors. Books unsuitable for the children were removed.

In December, two French volunteers, Julie and Florence, helped the staff teach and cook. They also organised all manner of sports activities. Because these two volunteers arrived right when Sue (who is responsible for the girls' orphanage) had just undergone major surgery, she received the rest she needed. They also accompanied Sue to a check-up at the hospital. Unfortunately, Julie suddenly fell ill herself and had to be rushed to a hospital in Yangon.

The volunteers' contribution gives added value to the lives of the vulnerable children in the orphanage and of the teachers who lead very isolated lives here.

Collaboration

Previously, we mentioned sponsoring the nearby Myitta Mon orphanage, eventually aiming to utilise each other's strengths. This sponsoring takes place in collaboration with a German foundation. We agreed to annually evaluate whether we wish to continue this sponsorship. Therefore, in the first quarter of 2017, partly on the basis of advice from our Burmese adviser, we will decide whether or not to continue this sponsorship.

Donations

In 2016, we received an extra donation of € 10,000 from the French company Amadeus. Amadeus is one of the world's largest technology companies in the global travel industry. Their products help to improve business performance of travel agencies, hotels, airlines, etc. Every year, within the framework of corporate social responsibility, the board of Amadeus makes an amount available for charities. We have been receiving donations from this fund for over ten years now and in 2016 we received an additional donation because of the fact that certain goals were realised. With this amount, we can provide shelter, food and education for approximately 40 children a year. We are very grateful to the board of Amadeus.

We would also like to thank the Coromandel foundation from Switzerland for their great gift of € 4,600.

Naturally, we are also very grateful to all other donors for their financial support; this is the very foundation that keeps us afloat.

Board

Unfortunately, the collaboration with our board members has become troublesome, partly because the website is no longer kept up-to-date. Our foundation's adviser, Maria Overmars, was asked to advise us on possible solutions.

This advice has now been received and, in summary, is as follows: 'all board members must step down and make room for new board members'. A complete change of the board that is, giving us a fresh start. As secretary/treasurer of the foundation, I underwrite this advice. Over the course of 2017, we will inform you on the progress of this change.

Rest assured, 'the shop will be well cared for' in the transitional period.

Website and Facebook

The website and Facebook are our business cards and are indispensable in our communication with donors; these are the perfect recruitment media for acquiring new donors. These also form the information media for the travellers who want to visit our orphanage.

In 2016, I, as secretary of the board, was asked many questions by yourself, but also by tourists who wished to visit our orphanages, about the fact that our website and Facebook page are no longer updated by the board. There were also questions about why the progress reports of the previous years had been removed. Although these media did not belong to my portfolio, I would like to apologise for what happened.

The new board will be ordered to update or renew the website as soon as possible (In the meantime, we have updated the website entirely !)

Maintaining the Facebook page will also be a priority. The orphanages do have an updated Facebook page and this page could be linked to the Facebook page of our foundation.

Thanks

The children and staff of the orphanages are extremely grateful for the support the foundation has received from all donors - whether large or small - private persons, charity funds, churches and volunteers in 2016.

Goodbye

Throughout the years, I have had the pleasure to write all of our progress reports. After fifteen years, this will be my last report. I would like to thank you for all the support I have received. Without your support, I would have been unable to fulfil my position and the foundation would not have been able to exist. If you want to reach me personally, please send a mail to : simon_goede@hotmail.com

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