

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

Dear donor or sponsor,

This is the sixteenth progress report issued since our foundation was founded in 2002. It concerns developments in Burma (Myanmar) in general and the work done over 2017 for the boys' and girls' orphanage in Minethouk, Burma.

### **Developments in Burma**

Until five years ago, Burma suffered under a military dictatorship that had spanned half a century. Nationalist Buddhism dominated that period and the military regime created a fertile breeding ground for fear and hostility towards certain ethnic groups and against Rohingya Muslims.

Burma is still considered 'a conundrum for many people, shrouded in a mystery within a secrecy' to quote Churchill's view on Russia. Burma is the sum of contradictions, and it is not easy to determine what the correct outcome of that sum is. Could it be hope, because of the new quasi-democratic government and impressive economic growth? Or is it despair, because of the lack of fundamental freedoms (symbolised by the lack of citizenship and freedom of movement for the severely persecuted and discriminated Rohingya Muslims) and because of the conflicts in other states?

Rohingya Muslims have been coming to the Burmese border region of Rahkhine since the mid-nineteenth century, forming a small, severely disadvantaged minority in the predominantly Buddhist country. The Burmese government does not recognise them as citizens. Over the past few decades, violence has erupted several times between the Rohingya and Burmese Buddhists with fighting reaching peak levels in recent months, causing more than half a million flee to Bangladesh.

There are also conflicts in the state of Kachin between the Burmese army and the Kachin Independence Army. In the Shan state, there are conflicts between the army and armed ethnic groups.

The army still has total control over the powerful Ministries of Defence and Home Affairs as well as over most of the civil service. For Aung San Suu Kyi, these are arduous times as she is well aware that it would be political suicide if she turns against the army and the consequences that that would have.

Despite all these challenges, economic growth is still very high (6%) and is among the highest in the world.

### **Our orphanages**

Sue, who had been responsible for the girls' orphanage since 2005, unfortunately resigned as of 1 June 2017. Sue has worked with us for over 12 years and has been invaluable for the children. She was always there for 'her' children, day and night. To tourists, she would speak in her own unique and enthusiastic manner about the care and guidance of the children. A few tourists were so impressed by the work of Sue that they later worked as volunteers in the orphanages for a few weeks.

Her leaving is a huge loss for our orphanages. We are very grateful to Sue for what she has done for the children and us. Her colleague Nilar, who is responsible for the boys' orphanage, will take over her duties for the time being until a successor is found.

By the end of 2017, there were 48 girls and 35 boys in our orphanages, totalling 83 children. Of these children, there were 15 orphans, 38 had no father or mother and 30 were children whose parents were extremely poor.

In 2017, five girls and one boy graduated High School. Two girls had unfortunately failed their exam. The exams are exclusively written exams. Students are only told whether they have passed or failed. No marks are given per component!

The two boys who passed the High School in 2015, are still completing a (four-year) study programme at the agricultural school in Heho. Both are now in their third year. Of the five girls who passed for High School in 2015, two are currently training as a nurse in Taunggyi. Five girls follow the Distance University and work as well, in the hope of studying further.

Due to tourism growing rapidly, a large number of hotels have been built in the Inle Lake district, where our orphanages are located. The demand for hotel staff has therefore increased significantly. Our children who have passed the High School can now easily find a job in one of these hotels. There, they can earn a relatively high salary. Six of our children with a High School diploma already work in these hotels. The downside of this positive development, however, is that the enthusiasm for studying has declined.

During the rainy season (April to November), the public grid interrupts the power supply for an average of two hours per day. This usually happens during the evening. Based on advice from volunteer Marianne Gaultier, a French engineer, batteries and transformers were installed so the children's classrooms and bedrooms have electricity during these times of interruption. The batteries are charged with electricity from the public grid. The cost of this investment was a mere € 300. The children and staff are very happy with this inventive solution.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers again came to the orphanages in 2017. In March, Lindsay Strout from Canada taught English for a number of days. In August, Gauffre Alexia from France gave English and French lessons.

Marianne Gaultier from France took care of the batteries and transformers in September. She has also checked whether it was profitable for solar panels to be installed on the orphanages. Marianne has listed all the technical data necessary for an investment request. However, due to the low kWh price, it is currently not profitable enough to switch to solar panels. Moreover, it appears that the life span of solar panels available in Burma is 50% shorter compared to those of Western countries. As soon as the energy situation in Burma changes, we can happily take advantage of this preliminary study. We are immensely grateful to Marianne for what she has done for the orphanages in just a short time. Installing the electricity emergency system in particular, has proved its worth right from the start.

In October, Emma Bonnefous from France gave the children a week of dance lessons. She created a very nice video of that.

Tjitske Bakker, a nurse from the Netherlands, checked all medication and bandages in the orphanages in October, supplementing them where necessary. She also gave the staff information about CPR and what to do when someone is choking. As a reminder, Tjitske created a written document of the oral instruction. She also created a document stating what medication should be given to the children and under which circumstances. She did this because people are rather quickly inclined to give antibiotics for all kinds of minor ailments.

In the few days that Tjitske was in the orphanages, she did extraordinarily useful work. In view of the limited medical knowledge there, attempts will be made to find another nurse next year who is prepared to equip the staff with a few weeks' worth of medical information.

### **Website**

The website was completely updated in 2017. All the deleted progress reports over the past few years can now be found on the website again. In addition, a page called 'latest news' has been added.

**Donations**

In total, we received over € 17,000 in donations, of which approximately half were from foundations in Switzerland, Leiden and Landsmeer and the other half from private individuals from home and abroad.

**Cor Visser**

Under the title 'Special people don't die, they go away but stay forever', our foundation has placed an advertisement in the Kompas (a regional Dutch newspaper in Landsmeer, the place where Cor lived, and the surrounding area). On 23 December 2017, it was exactly ten years ago that Cor Visser died in Burma. Cor was the founder of Care for Children Foundation and has been of great importance to the orphanages.

**Board**

In our progress report for 2016, we stated that due to some issues in the cooperation between the board members, all board members would be replaced by new members in 2017. This in accordance with the recommendation provided by our adviser Maria Overmars. So far, however, it has not been possible to find suitable candidates to fill in the various vacancies. The position of website manager has been temporarily taken over by the undersigned.

You can be assured that the management and children of the orphanages have not suffered or will not suffer any disadvantages from the board changes. Every two months, I report to our advisor Maria Overmars about all activities relating to the orphanages.

**Thanks**

The children and staff of the orphanages are extremely grateful to you for all the support the foundation has received from you and from all donors, large and small, private and charity funds, from the churches and from the volunteers in 2017.

Warm regards,

Simon Goede  
Outgoing secretary/treasurer

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