

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Dear donor or sponsor,

This is the 17th progress report since the beginning of our foundation in 2002. It deals with developments in Burma (Myanmar) and the work done in 2018 for the boys' and girls' orphanage in Minethouk, Burma.

Developments in Burma

Burma and neighbouring Bangladesh have been trying for some time to begin allowing the return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims, expelled from Burma, who are staying in refugee camps in Bangladesh in atrocious conditions. Almost none of them want to return to Burma's Rakhine region (where the Rohingya came from) because they fear ending up between the same regional neighbours who previously terrorized the Rohingya. The Rohingya also fear the Burmese army, which previously expelled them from the country. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has conducted an investigation into the violence against the Rohingya and released a devastating report.

A new powder keg has come into being in Burma's Rakhine region. A group of Buddhist rebels from the Rakhine ethnic group, who form the majority in this area, are fighting for Rakhine autonomy. The group refers to Rakhine as 'the land of Arakan' which was an independent kingdom until the 18th century. They consider the Burmese, who comprise the majority in Burma as a whole, to be colonial oppressors. These rebels already attacked police posts and safety troops last December. The Burmese army has announced they will use force against these rebels. The army has also started an offensive against the Kachin, a predominantly Christian minority in the northeast of Burma.

Violence is typical of Burma, which has been continuously struggling with its ethnic and religious diversity ever since its independence in 1948. There are around 135 recognized ethnic groups in Burma, and over 100 different languages are spoken in the country. Over 65% of the population belongs to the Bamar ethnic group, whose native language is Burmese. The Bamar hold the power in the army, as well as key positions in the government, and are trying to force their language and culture onto other ethnic groups. As a result, various ethnic groups have been carrying out armed protests for decades, especially in the border regions.

An estimated 23% of children aged 5-16 in Burma are not registered with any school. In this respect it was important that in May of 2018, Burma was the 66th country that joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In cooperation with its GPE partners, Burma has formulated its priorities for education in a national strategic education plan. Among other things, the plan offers a road map for educational reforms, from nursery school through higher education. Reforms in nursery schools began in 2018, so it will take probably a long time before all schools have been reformed.

Despite all of its ethnic problems, Burma's economic growth is still very high (> 6%), among the highest in the world. Inflation in 2018 was over 8%.

Our orphanages

The area where our orphanages are based is located in central Burma near Inle Lake, and so far has fortunately been spared from the ethnic insurgencies described above. The main inhabitants of Inle Lake and the surrounding area are the Intha minority. Most Intha people make their living cultivating vegetables in floating gardens. They are mostly traditional Buddhists that live in simple houses, built on wooden poles and made of woven bamboo.

The father of the orphanage U Tet Tun has not yet been able to find a suitable successor for Sue, who left on 1 June 2017. Nilar, who is responsible for the boys' orphanage, has temporarily taken up responsibility for the girls' orphanage as well. She is supported there by five young volunteers from the region who are looking to gain work experience. All five of them have High School diplomas. The father of the orphanage hopes to find a suitable successor for Sue among these volunteers. The rest of the staff consists of Bran Saing, who is responsible for IT, and Mya Sein, who is responsible for the kitchen.

Right now, twelve girls and two boys, all with High School diplomas, are enrolled in the Distance University. All of these children have temporary jobs. In case these children's income is not sufficient to pay their tuition fees, it will be added to by the orphanages. In 2018, six of our fourteen young students were supported.

At the end of 2018, 53 girls and 35 boys were living in our orphanages, adding up to a total of 88 children. Out of these children, 31 were orphan, 20 had no father, 23 had no mother, and 14 were children of very poor parents.

Eight children did their final exams for High School; only two of them passed. In response to this poor result, the father of the orphanage will try to temporarily appoint two experienced teachers in 2019 to give homework support to the children in their final year of High School.

The two boys who passed their High School exams in 2015 and studied for four years at the agricultural school in Heho, have graduated. A girl with a High School diploma who was studying to become a nurse in Taunggyi graduated in 2018. The other girl (also with a High School diploma) is in her last year.

Plans for 2019

There are only four toilets in the boys' orphanage, for around 40 boys. There are long lines for the toilets especially during peak hours. The father of the orphanage has proposed to install five extra toilets. These toilets will be connected to the sewage and water facilities that currently exist in the space. Moreover, extra sinks will be installed as well. The total cost is estimated at €3,200.

Our orphanages are not connected to any water network and use groundwater that is pumped up. This water is collected in a large water tank. In the past few years, there has regularly been a water shortage in the summer months. The father of the orphanage has proposed to drill two new, high-quality wells, each with a depth of 90 metres. The total cost is estimated at €5,000.

The volunteers

Volunteers from France have travelled to the orphanages again in 2018. In May, when their children were off school, Nicolas (aged 36, IT-manager) and his wife Stéphanie (aged 33, doctor of rheumatology), went there. Stéphanie gave the children and staff instructions about reanimation, how to act in case of suffocation and loss of consciousness, as well as how to bandage wounds. In addition, she checked and restocked medications. Nicolas gave guitar lessons and inspected all of the computers. It was good to hear that the educational packages, donated to the orphanages in 2016 by the volunteers from Taiwan (Boaz and Noa), are being used intensively.

Nicolas and Stéphanie also gave English and French lessons, sung English and French songs with the children every day, and danced with the children. They also organised a 'pancake party' and went to the swimming pool for a day. On top that, they also took the children on a boat trip across the lake, visited a pagoda, a market, an aquarium, and a weaving workshop. The children had a wonderful time.

Nicolas and Stéphanie made a beautiful video documenting their ten-day stay in the orphanages, which can be viewed on our website (www.careforchildren.nu). We are extremely grateful to Nicolas and Stéphanie for their efforts.

This year as well, two French volunteers will be travelling to our orphanages. The volunteers make a valuable contribution to the lives of the vulnerable orphans, as well as the lives of the staff members. Moreover, these volunteers are the eyes and ears of the foundation's governing board.

Donations

We received well over €19,000 in donations in 2018 (€17,000 in 2017). 65% of that amount was received from foundations in Switzerland, France and Holland. 35% of the donations were received from private persons based both domestically and abroad. Due to the increasing age of our donors, the 'noise' in the cooperation between members of the board, and people 'getting tired' of donating, private donations are unfortunately decreasing steadily.

Board

In March/April 2019, we hope to be able to tell you more about the succession of the chairman and the treasurer/secretary on the board.

Thanks

The children and staff at the orphanages are extraordinarily grateful to you for all of the support the foundation has received in 2018 from you and from all of the donors, both big and small, be they private donations or charity funds and from churches.

We are also very grateful to the volunteers for their commitments to the children.

Kind regards,

Simon Goede
Outgoing secretary/treasurer

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