

Personal and Confidential

PEOPLE IN NEED – GERHARD BAUMGARD STIFTUNG: A personal review of its activities in Burma. Update 10/2006

Summer 2006

It seems like decades ago that I sat at my desk in an investment bank dreaming up structures for M&A deals and trying to convince clients to engage my bank for a specific company transaction. Life was hectic, no minute to spare and a full calendar with meetings and appointments for weeks and months ahead.

Life at the Thai/Burma border could not be more different. It is a long wait, a seemingly endless string of inactivity and waiting: Early morning in the Golden Triangle, sitting at the Thai/Burma border bridge in Maesai and watching the endless flow of Burmese crossing the border for the day; waiting for "our" children to arrive from Burma. We want to bring the children for urgent surgery to the Thai Provincial Hospital – Chiangrai, 60 km away. Waiting for the Burmese and Thai border police to let the kids and their mothers pass. Finally, they are through; then again waiting to get the transferal letter from the local Thai hospital to the bigger hospital in the Provincial capital where the doctors can do the surgery. With this in hand, we finally arrive at the Immigration Office to get the permits to travel further into Thailand; the officer is grumpy and unhappy with his job – he must have lost his smile in the "Land of Smiles" long ago. After paying for the permits, the Burmese have three days only to get to the hospital, to undergo surgery and to disappear from Thai soil again. After making the road checkpoints – filtering out any Burmese without valid travel documents - we finally arrive at the Chiangrai hospital in the afternoon, waiting for the pediatrician. And then the bad news: the surgery schedule for the next day has filled up: 'Please come back in two months'. What should we do? As always there is a solution: "Hey, it's Thailand": The doctor also practices in a private hospital. He offers to do the operation there, the next day in the evening. Of course, the price tag will be higher... how much? Three times! O.k. The morning after the surgery we collect the kids and their mothers, drive through all the checkpoints back to the border, pick up their ID-cards at Immigration and finally, hand them over to the Good Shepherd Sisters who will take care of the kids in their convent, 30 km inside of Burma, until they have fully recovered. Waiting, waiting, waiting a constant test of patience and persistence. Is it worth it?

Yes! The reward comes in little things: Seeing a baby girl being able to suck its bottle properly for the first time after only one cleft-lip operation, witnessing the joy of little children in attending a nursery, witness the pride of the poor villages after the first girl ever passed high-school, providing fresh water to a small community which didn't have a proper water supply, and, and, and ...



Cleft palate: Laura before Surgery



Two Weeks after First Surgery

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After having been busy with this day-to-day hustle over the last couple of months, I pulled back a bit to define a new strategy for the Burmese activities of my foundation PEOPLE IN NEED (PIN) and find other ways to help the people in Burma. The two earlier attempts to start PIN's own projects in Myanmar were not as successful as I had hoped.

I. The Start: The First 12 Months

In 2004, PIN gained access to the restricted areas in Kayin (Karen) State in Burma's mountains and jungles close to the Thai borders. Here, a 60-year long war rages between the government military and the independence army of the Karen minority (KNU). With a Buddhist monk – U Thuzana, spiritual leader of the 5,000 soldiers strong Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) - PIN started the construction of a boarding house for 200 children at the local Basic Education High-school. The start was very promising. We laid the foundation stone and the construction got underway. But then the Burmese Prime Minister was sacked, being sentenced to 44 years in prison, and the about 10,000 employees' strong Military Intelligence Department was dissolved. The higher ranks disappeared into prison with jail terms of more than 100 years each and the lower ranks were forced into retirement. Unfortunately, the responsibility for foreigners working for NGOs was handed over from the Military Intelligence officers to the regional Military Commanders. As a result, PIN and other International Aid Organizations were not allowed to travel into the restricted areas anymore: the border areas became absolutely off-limits for foreigners. Without being able to travel to the construction site anymore the budget for the proposed boarding house ran out of control. PIN had to put the funding on hold. I had hoped that the building stop would be temporary and that the South-East Commander of the Burmese Military would grant a travel permit after some time and the construction of the boarding house could continue. But 2 years later the situation has gotten worse and travel restrictions are even tighter. Without the continuation of PIN's funding the monk modified the construction plan, cancelled kitchen, washrooms, and dining and study hall and converted the envisioned boarding house into an additional school building. It is finished now and fortunately, it has some good use.

PIN's second 2004 project did only marginally better. Together with a local Myanmar NGO – Shalom (Nyein) Foundation - which focuses on peace-building and conflict resolution work, PIN started workshops on Participatory Action Research. We teach villagers to identify and prioritize needs for community projects and some basics on writing project proposals and managing development projects. We targeted townships in one of the poorest States in Myanmar, Kayah (Karenni) State. We started the workshops but as a result of an unstable security situation we could – up to now - only finish three of the planned eight workshops. Of course, this area around Loikaw is also off-limits for foreigners: I was never allowed to visit the workshops in action. However, we did not give up; Shalom Foundation will continue the workshops with locals and with the financial help by PIN.

To make a major in-road into Burma, I played with the idea of a registration of People In Need and a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the military government. However, after reviewing the Official Guidelines for Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) we decided against it. Other than the very cumbersome administrative procedure to attain an agreement, the Myanmar Government will determine the activities of the projects: international staff has to be pre-approved by the Ministries involved and national staff members may be proposed by the government; travel of international staff inside of Myanmar is restricted and – even in tourist areas – a travel permit has to be issued for every trip of a foreigner; when traveling the NGO will always be accompanied by a government official; the NGO is only allowed to conduct the approved activities and, e.g. in case of a natural disaster, is not allowed to extent humanitarian emergency help to the victims; the project management has always to include the local authorities; ... and worst of all, the

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government suggested that all financial donations have to go through the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank.

In retrospect, the decision against a registration of PIN in Myanmar proved right as the restrictions for the activities of international NGOs tightened over the last 18 months dramatically:

- In August 2005, the Global Fund announced that it would terminate the USD 100 millions grants program for fighting HIV, TB and Malaria in Myanmar. Government restrictions make the grant implementation impossible and grants could not be managed in a way that ensured a effective program implementation.
- In November 2005, the authorities told the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that government officials must accompany all their visits to prisons. The ICRC rejected this out of hand - it is their international practice to visit and talk to prisoners privately without any government supervision. Since February 2006, the ICRC has stopped all prison visits in Myanmar.
- Early 2006, the French section of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) pulled out of Myanmar, as "The Burmese regime wants absolute control over any humanitarian actor present in these politically-sensitive regions. If we accept the restrictions imposed on us today, we would become nothing more than a technical service provider subject to the political priorities of the junta. It appears that the Burmese authorities do not want anyone to witness the abuses they are committing against their own population".
- In February 2006, the junta refused to renew the visa of the country representative for Humanitarian Dialogue, a Geneva-based conflict-resolution outfit that played a behind-the-scenes role in establishing UN-brokered negotiations between the SPDC (the Myanmar Military Government) and the opposition party, National League for Democracy, in 2003. Humanitarian Dialogue closed its office in Yangon.
- And in January 2006, Razali Ismail, the Special Envoy of the General Secretary of the United Nations for Burma, decided not to continue his job which he had done since 2000 after he had been refused entry into Burma for nearly two years.

With all the restrictions on humanitarian aid PIN continued to support existing local NGOs through funding. When in 2004 a severe flood hit Myitkyina, Kachin State, in the north of Myanmar, PIN supported the local Christian and Buddhist organizations to provide emergency help: shelter, food, and cleaning the drinking water wells. As the accredited international NGOs were not allowed to help PIN quickly became one of the biggest donors with very limited amounts. Similarly, PIN arranged the funding for the renovation of a Catholic Boarding House through the Catholic Bishop in Limburg, Germany. The condition of the boarding house was beyond any Western comprehension; it had been built by French missionaries in Kanazogone in the Ayeyarwady River Delta in 1929 and had never undergone any other renovation than getting a tin roof.



Kanazogone Boarding House

Furthermore, PIN supported Burmese poor by paying hospital bills and medical costs, language classes and by making donations to local private cancer hospices.

II. Trying Harder: The Next 18 Months

Early 2005, I was fed up of hanging around in Yangon without direct access to the poor people in remote areas which PIN wanted to help; I left Yangon in March 2005. I wanted PIN to try two different avenues to improve the livelihood of the Burmese people. I wanted to establish a commercial orientated vocational training program in the jewelry industry in Yangon. Parallel to that, I planned to establish humanitarian projects for Burmese in the Golden Triangle, the border area between Burma, Thailand and Laos; an area which historically had been rampant with human- and drug-trafficking and is one of the most HIV-affected regions in Asia. Both approaches got off to a good start.

1. Vocational Training Center for the Jewelry Industry in Yangon

Jointly with a German Jeweler we developed the plan for a Vocational Training Center for Goldsmith, Silversmith, Jewelry, Jewelry Design and Objects. We envisioned a 12-36 months training program to educate and train Burmese students to become qualified goldsmiths, being able to manufacture jewelry of Western standards. The idea is that precious stones – sapphires, rubies and jade – are unique natural resources of Myanmar and are in high esteem by the Burmese political leaders and any upgrade of the Myanmar jewelry industry should be in their interest. In Burma most of the stones are exported in a rough and unfinished form, i.e., the income from manufacturing the finished jewelry will be generated outside of Myanmar (mostly Thailand and Switzerland), leaving the local industry with a tiny fraction of the potential profits. By educating young Myanmar nationals to design and manufacture high quality jewelry we hoped to upgrade the Myanmar jewelry industry and create highly qualified jobs. Such a training center could sell finished jewelry in a showroom to Western tourists and export it abroad. The revenues and study fees should enable the training center to be financially self-sufficient after 3-4 years.

In April 2005, I registered with the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) in Bangkok to learn more about colored gemstones and in August PIN initiated discussions with the Myanmar government. With the help of Thai Government Agencies, retired Myanmar Generals and senior Ministry Officials we held discussions with industry representatives and submitted a proposal to the Minister of Mines. But to this day, PIN did not hear back from the Ministry. Either the proposal has been forgotten, has been declined or is simply put on hold. The informal feedback is that the Ministry is busy with the relocation its offices to the new capital – Pyinmana or Naypyidaw, the New Royal City. Background: In a surprise move which stunned Western and fellow ASEAN Governments, the Myanmar Government relocated all of its ministries and offices to Pyinmana in November 2005. Pyinmana or Naypyidaw sits in a malaria-infested jungle area in between mountains, about 400 km north of Yangon. Within four months the move was completed but communication is difficult as the infrastructure, including telephone lines, is not up to speed yet. We continue to for an official response to our proposal; maybe one day there will be a call

2. Eastern Shan State

With the urge to continue the humanitarian work in Myanmar we analyzed the border situation between Thailand and Myanmar. Other than entering Myanmar by plane there are two border crossings for foreigners to enter Myanmar by land: one is Ranong/Kawthoung in the very South of Burma and one is Maesai/Tachilek in the very North of Thailand. Given the importance of Maesai and Tachilek as a trading hub for Thailand and Myanmar, we focused on the so-called Golden Triangle. PIN held preliminary discussions with the Thai authorities. All Thai provincial agencies, Thai border authorities and the Thai military welcomed PIN's initiative to help on the

Burmese side and promised to help us; the Burmese authorities remained non-committal.

2.1. Good Shepherd Sisters, Mong Kho Village Tract

In March 2005 PIN started to finance a rehabilitation and education project of the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters (GSS, in Germany: Schwestern vom Guten Hirten) in Mong Kho Village Tract, about 30 – 70 km away from Tachilek, inside of Eastern Shan State, Myanmar. The project for the ethnic minority hill-tribe of the Akha had been started by the Sisters in 2001 with UNDP funding (for one year only) as a rehabilitation project for drug users and villagers with HIV/AIDS: Historically, the villagers sold their daughters into prostitution to Thailand and took the money to buy and smoke opium. As a result many of the villagers were drug-addicted, HIV-positive and worst of all the young generation older than 12 years was gone – the boys didn't stay long after the girls had left. When we arrived UNDP had long stopped the funding and PIN took over the financing of the complete project.

After one year of successful cooperation between the GSS und PIN, the Sisters have expanded the project coverage from initially 6 villages with 900 villagers to 13 villages with 444 households, i.e. 2,331 villagers of which 720 are younger than 18 years.

With a project staff of 16 persons total (4 Sisters, 5 teachers for the nurseries and pre-school, 2 trainers for the sewing program, 1 trainer for handicrafts, 1 nurse, 1 translator and 2 workers) and several volunteers in the villages, the Good Shepherd Sisters run

- A nursery and pre-school with 50 children (70% are from Buddhist families) at the Convent in Yangon Ywar Village;
- Starting in November 2006, a nursery and pre-school with 25 children in Hway Thar 2 Village;
- An education program for 54 students attending Primary and Middle School with additional school education in the morning and evening, before and after public school education (in Burma private schools are not allowed);
- A boarding house with 15 girls attending Primary and Middle Schools
- A sewing training program to train 14 girls (including bar girls and former illegal migrant workers in Thailand)
- A sewing and handicraft workshop to generate income opportunities for about 100 women and girls in the villages;
- A boarding house for 12 girls attending the sewing training;
- A small pharmacy with a nurse which took care of 661 patients (including 250 children under 6 years) over the last 4 months (June to September 2006). In addition, PIN and the Sisters accompanied the most severe medical cases to Thai hospitals in Maesai, Chiang Saen and Chiang Rai (64 cases between June and September 2006);
- A hygiene and nutrition program for 50 poor children between 3 and 13 years from the neighboring villages;
- A counseling and support program for 25 HIV/Aids patients;
- Seminars and retreats for former drug users and seminars on hygiene and public health;
- Regular meetings and trainings of community leaders and villagers to improve health and livelihood in the villages.
- In addition, we sent 11 students (6 girls and 5 boys) to High-Schools in Mandalay, Thiri and Tachilek and pay for the boarding and school fees.

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Nursery Children and Project Team



Sewing Workshop with Contract Work

In June 2006 the Sisters opened a new nursery building at the Convent in Yangon Ywar Village; the construction was financed by the Bishop of Kentung; PIN will take up the operating expenses.



New Nursery Building in Yangon Ywar Village

In the neighboring village Hway Thar 2 PIN financed the construction and operation of an additional nursery. The new nursery and pre-school for 25 children will open on November 1, 2006 and will be run by two nursery teachers.



New Nursery Building in Hway Thar 2 Village

As many young girls from remote villages want to attend Primary and Middle Schools the Sisters asked the Catholic Bishop in Kentung for a new Boarding House for 80 girls. The project proposal was put to the Kindermissionswerk "Sternsinger" which approved the request verbally in September this year. As soon as the money arrives the construction of the boarding house will start. The construction will be finalized in

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2007; PIN committed to assume all expenses of running the new boarding house for 80 girls.

In the dry season 2006 the Sisters experienced a major water shortage. To prevent this from happening again and to prepare for the additional water consumption by the new boarding house PIN will finance the construction of a new 2km water pipeline and water tanks linking the Convent with the water supply at the other villages.



Water tank in Hway Thar 2 Village

2.2 Tachilek

In Tachilek town itself, PIN identified humanitarian need which would require immediate attention if only the Burmese authorities would allow PIN to work there.

1. HIV/AIDS
2. Street Children
3. Education for Girls

Tachilek is a buzzing border town with about 50,000 inhabitants, mostly Shan and member of smaller hill-tribes. Due to its border location Tachilek became one of the main trading hubs with Thailand and is comparatively rich. Tachilek District boasts four huge gambling casinos which serve mostly Thai clientele as gambling is prohibited in Thailand – as it is in Burma. Nobody in Tachilek will accept the local currency, Myanmar Kyats, all payments are made in Thai Baht and in contrast to the rest of Myanmar, everybody seems to own a mobile phone with a Thai prepaid card. About 1400 km – a three to four day bus travel - away from Yangon, life is less restricted than in the rest of the country. Between 6 am and 6 pm Tachilek citizens move freely - with one day border passes - over the bridge to Maesai. If villagers don't have a Burmese ID card they just cross the small border river illegally by boat or in the dry season on foot. Every morning 850 Burmese school children cross from Tachilek to Thailand to attend Thai private schools. However, this relative freedom has its limits: No Burmese is allowed to go beyond the city confines of Maesai and no Burmese girl or young woman below the age of 25 from outside of Tachilek is officially allowed to cross the border; if she wants she has to pay a bribe.

The border at Tachilek continues to be one of the main routes for opium, heroin and amphetamine pills - Myanmar still is the world's second largest opium and heroin producer – and for human trafficking from Myanmar to Thailand. Being by far richer than Burma, Thailand is enormously attractive for poor and uneducated Burmese as they find job opportunities as illegal workers everywhere. In the border area prostitution and drug-usage are rampant with a result of high HIV and TB infections. In Myanmar reliable data are not available; however, in 2000 WHO reported that 3.5% of the adult population is HIV-infected and 40% of Burma's population is infected with TB. In 2004, the Government's National AIDS Control Program was funded with US\$ 22,000 (in words: twenty-two-thousand US-Dollars!) for the whole

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of Burma. In the last WHO country-survey Burma's health system ranked 190 out of 191 globally.

About 50 - 100 children, between 2 and 15 years, beg for money everyday at the Tachilek-Maesai Border Bridge. They are mostly Shan and Akha; about 50% without parents (dead or imprisoned in Thai or Burmese jails, mostly because of drug smuggling) and the other 50% have parents at home; most of the parents are drug-addicted or too lazy to work: the children's begging income provides for food and drugs. The average income of street children is about 200 Baht per day (US\$ 5). At Songkran, Buddhist New Year, and during the high season they may get up to 1,000 Baht per day (US\$ 28). Compared to this the wage for a day laborer of less than US\$ 1 is ridiculously low. Some children will return home in the evening, others will sleep under the bridge or swim to Thai side and will spend the night in front of the Maesai convenience stores. And even a 3 or 4 years many of the children are drug addicted themselves. We have seen bad cases at the border: PIN provided for medical care for a 12-year old girl whose mother threw repeatedly boiling water at her, injuring her severely, but making her look pitiful so she could get more money with begging. Similarly, we paid the hospital bills for two little girls from Burma, 6 and 3 ½ years old, who had been raped by relatives. After medical treatment we can only keep them for a couple of days in a "safe house" in Thailand; they all want to return to their mothers in Tachilek and the same sad stories will repeat again and again. Here, only a comprehensive program for the begging children including the education of the parents might stop the abuse.

In Tachilek itself about 4000 – 5000 pupils attend the Public Middle and High Schools. Many more children from remote villages would like to join the schools but cheap boarding house places are only available for boys. Four Buddhist monasteries offer places for about 500 boys but there are no places for poor girls; Tachilek does not have any Buddhist nunneries. The Christian churches do little to fill this gap. Only the Catholic Church has a place for 20 girls.



Boys at Buddhist Monasteries in Tachilek

Unfortunately, the authorities in Tachilek don't allow PIN to address any of these needs directly; the Thai border authorities cannot help as they don't have any leverage on the other side of the border. PIN doesn't want to follow the example of Thai NGOs on the Thai side of the border and accommodate and educate Burmese children in Thailand. By training the Thai language skills without any proper Burmese education these children will not return to Burma but are bound to become the next generation of illegal workers in Thailand.

Only one international NGO, World Vision, is allowed to work in Tachilek. World Vision started its operation in Tachilek about ten years ago; nowadays its activities are very low-key and it employs local staff only. They are not longer allowed to show their sign at the office and after finishing the construction of two primary schools last year, the schools had to be handed over to the Ministry of Education immediately. All over Myanmar, more and more projects of international and national NGOs are hijacked and taken over by the so-called Governmental NGOs, such as USDA (Union Solidarity

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and Development Association), MWA (Myanmar Women's Affair Federation), MMWA (Myanmar Maternity Welfare Association) and Myanmar Red Cross.

Now, the only way for relatively unhindered humanitarian activities - without giving the money to the government directly - is to seek the protection of a religious organization and hide under their umbrella. Such an organization can be - depending on its regional strength - a Christian (mostly Baptist or Catholic) or a Buddhist entity. When the Tachilek SPDC Commander blatantly suggested, that PIN should give the money for an envisioned project for HIV-prevention, street children and a boarding house for girls to the local authorities directly, PIN declined. Instead, PIN teamed up with one of the most respected Shan monks. Khrubar Seng Hlar is 78 years and resides in his Two Dragon Monastery in Tachilek. He draws his power from his Buddhist achievements; he has attained the second highest spiritual level in the Burmese Buddhist hierarchy; his complete title is unpronounceable: Phrakruwa Seng Hlar Venerable Dhammasiri Abhidhaja-Aggamaha-Saddhamma-Jotika, Aggamaha-Pandita, Aggamaha-Saddhama-Jotikadhaja of Ngagar Hnakaung Monastery in Tachilek, Shan State (East).



Khrubar Seng Hlar, Tachilek

In 2002, Khrubar Seng Hlar started to build a 200-bed hospital in Tachilek: At the new Dhammasiri Hospital medical care should be provided free of charge for the poor. When we met him in 2005 for the first time, the hospital construction according to plans and specifications from Thailand was almost 90% completed. Most of the US\$ 6 million construction budget had been donated by Thai individuals and institutions such as the Thai Royal Family, Thai Lotto Company, and families of former Thai Prime Ministers. The reasons for this generosity were simple: it was the respect for the Shan monk - the Shan belong to the ethnic group as the Thais - and more importantly, the intention to upgrade the health care situation on the Myanmar side to stem the flow of sick Burmese to Thailand. After our first meeting we spent many hours with the monk discussing the need for a hospital director and a proper organization of the hospital, a topic which did not worry Khrubar Seng Hlar at all: His only concern was to finish the hospital construction and start worrying about operational questions only after the last beds and surgical tables would be installed. To help him to attain this goal PIN donated the oxygen supply equipment for the hospital.

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Dhammasiri Hospital, Tachilek

Now, the hospital is finished and its future hinges on five critical issues:

- the operating permit for the hospital has to be granted by the Myanmar Government;
- doctors and nurses with Burmese license have to be identified and employed;
- the medicines and medical supplies have to be sourced;
- the supply of electricity has to be secured from Thailand (in Tachilek electricity is not available 24-hours a day, it is unstable and five times as expensive as on the Thai side); and
- the operational budget for the hospital has to be raised (US\$ 1.4 million p.a.).

So far the monk has resisted any governmental pressure to hand over the hospital. The situation at the 50-bed public hospital in Tachilek serves as a warning example; it is almost empty: No doctors, no medicines, and a few patients only. As salaries for doctors are low (about US\$ 20 per month), all of them have opted to run private clinics in addition to their hospital jobs. Patients arriving at the public hospital for treatment will simply be pointed to the private clinics where they have to pay for treatment and medicine.

If the Myanmar generals would be open to Western logic the operating permit for the Dhammasiri Hospital should be of no concern; the next Burmese hospital with surgical capabilities is in Kentung, about 200 km away. However, Western logic does seldom prevail in Myanmar: The hospital is negatively tainted as the foundation stone ceremony for the Dhammasiri Hospital was hosted by the former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, who was sentenced to 44 years in jail; and officially, there are no private hospitals in Myanmar. PIN abilities to support the monk in his endeavor are limited: On behalf of the monk PIN asked the Thai Minister of Health for the donation of medicines of about US\$ 500,000. Unfortunately, our request is on hold at the Thai Ministry of Health. At first, Thailand was governed by a Caretaker Government and now is governed by the military appointed government; both have domestic priorities and do not want to address this delicate cross-border issue. PIN's funding request to the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation was rejected as the Gates Foundation does not want to sponsor general health and health infrastructure projects.

III. What's next?

PIN will continue to support the projects in Eastern Shan State and Tachilek. However, on recent travels to Yangon and Mandalay we were shown again that the border area is relatively rich compared to the Myanmar mainland. After the government increased the salaries for all civil servants and the military by 500 – 1000% in April prices for the basis products, such as cooking oil and rice, exploded. Families struggle to earn the money for food and education of the children. In Mandalay – the second biggest city - a normal day laborer earns about 1,000 Kyats a day (about US\$ 70 cents); this could cover the basic living expenses about 2 years ago but after the recent increases of the cost of living a family rather needs US\$3 to 4 a day. This is most dramatic in the cities as the families depend completely on the

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income earned; in the smaller places, villagers can often resort to growing some food themselves.

The Head of the World Food Program visited some of WFP's projects in Myanmar last year. He found that one out of every three young children in Myanmar is chronically malnourished or physically stunted; eight percent are acutely malnourished and in some project areas the number of chronically malnourished children amounts to 60 or even 70%.

1. Mandalay

In one of the poorest townships of Mandalay, PIN will help YMCA to upgrade and expand its nursery with a new building. Currently, the nursery only has one room of 24 square meters for all 62 children. Due to the space constraints the children have to take their breakfasts and lunches outside in the open, about 4 meters away from the open toilet which is just a gutter of about 2 meters length.



YMCA Nursery Mandalay: Children



YMCA Nursery Mandalay: Dining Area



YMCA Nursery Mandalay: Children's Toilet



YMCA Nursery Mandalay: Construction Site

YMCA and PIN held discussions with the Australian Embassy in Yangon to share the construction cost for the new nursery building of US\$ 15,000. We expect that the Australian Embassy will approve its participation in the project in early November.

2. Yangon

Recently, PIN started to support two new projects in Downtown Yangon with the Good Shepherd Sisters at their Convent, the former German Club, next to the Latha Township High-School II and the Yangon General Hospital.

Jointly with the Sisters PIN decided to help children of one the poorest population groups in Yangon: day workers, garbage collectors and vendors in Latha Township. Most of them live in Dala Township on the Southern side of the Yangon River and some of them are homeless.

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After renovation of an old garage building at the GSS compound the Sisters started a nursery and pre-school for 25 children on October 2, 2006. In addition to a normal nursery we provide food and clothing to the children. The nursery program is complemented by regular meetings with the parents to make them aware of basic hygiene and health issues and help them with the education of their children.



**Good Shepherd Sisters Covent, Yangon
(Former (pre-WWI) German Club)**



GSS Nursery, Yangon



GSS Nursery, Yangon



GSS Nursery, Yangon

The second new program addresses the need of high-school graduates to learn some profession and gain professional experience. In September 2006 the Good Shepherd Sisters started a vocational training program for 10 girls. They will receive a 6 months training in different professions, such as accounting, sewing, nurse aid, nursery teacher, etc. This 6-months training will be followed by a further 6 months of professional experience through working in Yangon businesses. The training is conducted outside of the Covent at private sector institutions. The girls are high-

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school and university graduates and come from towns and villages all over Myanmar. They stay at the GSS Convent and will receive additional language and leadership training there. In their free time they join the social projects of the Sisters in Yangon.



Vocational Training at the GSS Convent: Sewing

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