

## **Report 2007**

Last year's report was titled "Burma: Progress like glue flowing uphill". In 2007 the glue dissolved under continued economic mismanagement and corruption, military boots, batons, teargas, bullets and arrests and the country is going downhill on all fronts.

"Today, [Burma]'s estimated per capita GDP is less than half that of Cambodia or Bangladesh. The average household is forced to spend almost three quarters of its budget on food. One in three children under five are suffering from malnutrition, and less than 50 percent of children are able to complete their primary education. It is estimated that close to seven hundred thousand people suffer from malaria and one hundred and thirty thousand from tuberculosis. Among those infected with HIV, an estimated sixty thousand people needing anti-retrovirals do not yet have access to this life-saving treatment." (Statement of the United Nations Team in Myanmar, October 25, 2007).

50 years of military dictatorship, rampant corruption and economic mismanagement have ruined the resource rich country. The education system receives minimal public funding; the health system ranks worst in the world (WHO) and according to Transparency International corruption is the worst out of 180 surveyed countries (ranking last together with Somalia). The majority of the population, living in the countryside, doesn't have access to government health and education services and employment opportunities outside of the agriculture sector are not available. Residents in the urban areas also face worsened conditions: inflation is rising (estimates for 2007 are between 35 and 50% p.a.), unemployment is high, daily electrical power outages are frequent, and the public infrastructure such as roads, railways and water and sanitation deteriorates rapidly.

As the military junta continues to tightly control the activities of the international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) PIN continues to operate in Myanmar without legal status by running its projects through local NGOs, Christian and Buddhist institutions. The international NGOs have been reminded that their foreign workers have to be accompanied by a liaison officer from the respective ministry when travelling in the country and that they are prohibited to collect other information than those related to their approved projects. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been almost completely paralyzed; it is not allowed to visit the prisons anymore, only the two ICRC orthopedic clinics which provide artificial arms and legs are welcome. And after the United Nations Team in Myanmar issued the above statement in October it was accused of interfering into the internal affairs of the country and the UN Country Director had to leave Burma after his visa was not extended.

### **I. New Projects**

In 2007 PIN started two major new projects and several smaller activities. The two projects demonstrate the irrationality of government inference into humanitarian assistance by foreigners. PIN's assistance for the only remaining small Buddhist monastery which openly supports HIV/AIDS patients has to be kept secret; otherwise the monastery might be closed down as numerous others before. The other project supports mentally ill ex-political prisoners and their relatives; the project is run by the personal physician of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who has been under house arrest for 12 years out of the last 17 years. This project can be openly supported by PIN without any negative effects.

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**1. Zaba Aye Monastery, Yangon: Support for HIV/AIDS Patients**

Two years ago U Kunnala, the young Buddhist abbot of Zabu Aye Monastery in Yangon started to help HIV/AIDS patients. His monastery is just opposite of the main gate of Way Baw Gyi Hospital, one of the two public hospitals which provide ARV medicine to HIV/AIDS patients. The monk provides accommodation and food to about 30 patients and their families; the patients receive their medicine once a month from the Government Hospital opposite.

When PIN was introduced to the monk in April 2007 the boarding house for the patients was a mere wooden shell with a roof and did not have any outside walls and a staircase to the first floor. PIN helped the monk to fit the boarding house with bamboo walls and proper stairs before the rainy season got underway.



**Boarding House before**



**and after fitting walls and windows**

After the monsoon season we tackled the abysmal sanitary situation; with help of an engineer friend and his construction company PIN build toilets, washroom and a proper kitchen. The new annex to the boarding house was formally opened on January 6, 2008.



**Annex (toilets, washroom, kitchen)**



**U Kunnala and Gerhard Baumgard**

**2. Moon Shade Karuna Association: Care and Support for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Patients**

In August 2007 PIN started to fund a one year project which focuses on ex-political prisoners and their families who are affected by a mental trauma (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – PTSD). The program is organized and conducted by the Dr. Tin Myo Win and his

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organization, Moon Shade Karuna Association (MSKA). Dr. Tin Myo Win is the Head of the Surgical Department at the Free Muslim Hospital in Yangon and looks after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Laureate, as her personal physician since 18 years. MSKA is a group of 45 highly motivated and socially active young women volunteers between 18 and 30 years old.



**Dr. Tin Myo Win**



**Group Activity at Workshop**

Under the PTSD-project we train 25 MSKA volunteers and 50 young volunteer facilitators from different townships in Yangon Division. After completing the training they will be able to identify and counsel PTSD-patients and refer patients to professional help if necessary. The emphasis of the PTSD-projects is on assisting ex-political prisoners and their family members who suffered traumatic stress. The MSKA members and facilitators are trained in several one-week workshops which are conducted with the help of active and retired psychiatrists and psychologists from Yangon hospitals and universities.

The program is a lot of fun: All participants - MSKA and facilitators - are volunteers and highly motivated young people; they are students, carpenters, health and social workers, municipal employees, lawyers, etc. And the project demonstrates the networking efforts of PIN's work: The project is run by a Buddhist doctor who works at the Muslim Hospital and the workshops are held at the Covent of the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters.

### **3. Other New Activities**

From case to case PIN supports the Volunteer Program for the Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Yangon to buy food or medicine for patients. The program supports some 50 HIV/AIDS patients and provides medicine, food, housing and counseling. The program manager participated in the demonstrations in August/September and is still in hiding to avoid arrest.

Opportunistically, PIN assisted individuals in emergency situations, such as obtaining proper legal documents, arranging for visas, flight tickets, money transfers, medical care, and life support.

During the course of the year PIN has started a small (free) consultancy practice. We assist Myanmar individuals and local NGOs in writing business plans and in formulating project proposals, and we help the German Kindermissionswerk "Die Sternsinger" with project applications from Myanmar.

## **II. Ongoing Projects**

### **1. YMCA Mandalay: New Nursery Building**

On April 14, 2007 YMCA opened a new nursery building for up to 100 children in one of the poorest townships of Mandalay, The project had been started in 2006 and the financing for the building was provided jointly by the Australian Embassy in Yangon and by PIN.



**Opening of New Mandalay Nursery**

In December 2007, the Catholic Kindermissionswerk "Die Sternsinger" approved a major contribution to buy new furniture and educational material.

### **2. Good Shepherd Sisters, Yangon**

In 2007 PIN continued the close cooperation with the Good Shepherd Sisters (GSS, an international Catholic congregation) at their Convent in Downtown Yangon. The convent is located in the building of the former (Pre-WWI-) German Club, next to the Latha Township High-Schools and the Yangon General Hospital.

#### **2.1 Nursery for Socially-Disadvantaged Children**

In October 2006 the Sisters started with the help of PIN a nursery for 30 children of one the poorest population groups in Yangon: Their parents are garbage collectors and cleaners at the General Hospital and street vendors in Latha Township. Most of them live in Dala Township on the Southern side of the Yangon River; some of them are homeless, sleeping in the open at the hospital or railway station compounds.

The children are between 3 and 6 years of age, 90% of the children are from Buddhist and Hindu families; the rest are Christians. Three trained nursery teachers look after the children. As most of the children don't get enough food at home we provide breakfast and lunch and clothing to the children. The nursery program includes bi-weekly parent meetings and home visits to educate parents in basic hygiene and health issues and to help them with the education of their children. With the start of the Vocational Training Program for Young Women (see below) we also train future nursery teachers from other parts of Myanmar in the Yangon nursery.

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**GSS Nursery Yangon**



**GSS Vocational Training Program**

## **2.2 Vocational Training and Leadership Program for Young Women**

In 2007 GSS and PIN completed the first one year vocational training program for 10 young women from different parts of Myanmar. The young women attended theoretical and practical trainings to become accountant (2), tailor (2), nurse aid (1), nursery teacher (2), and attained computer skills (2). In addition, the girls were educated in topics such as self awareness, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, leadership, and accountability and responsibility. In June the girls graduated and returned to their home towns and villages.

Based on the experiences of the first program we started in September 2007 a new program with 13 young women aged between 17 and 27 years. The training courses will be in sewing (6), accounting and English (2), nurse aid (3), and nursery teacher (2). In addition to the development of leadership skills all girls will receive English language training. As in the previous year the girls will stay at the Convent and will receive their theoretical and practical training in- and outside of the Convent.

We would like to expand the program but the boarding capacities at the Convent are limited. The Sisters have applied for the building permit for a new boarding house at their compound but the approval by the local authorities is pending since 10 months.

## **3. Shalom Foundation, Development Workshops in Kayah State**

In 2004, PIN started to cooperate with a local Myanmar NGO – Shalom Foundation (Nyein Foundation) - on joint development projects. Shalom Foundation focuses on dialogue, peace-building and conflict resolution between the government and the ethnic Minorities. Together we started workshops on Participatory Action Research in different townships of Kayah State. In the 2-week workshops the villagers learn to identify and prioritize the needs of their communities, learn basic project proposal writing skills and get an introduction to managing development projects.

So far we could only conduct four of the planned eight workshops. As a result of the decade-long fighting between government troops and insurgents the security situation is considered unstable and workshops are hard to organize. Shalom and PIN will review the project in early 2008 and decide on the future strategy and on the continuation of the workshops.

#### **4. Eastern Shan State**

##### **Good Shepherd Sisters, Mong Kho Village Tract**

PIN continues to support a rehabilitation and education project of the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters in Mong Kho Village Tract, about 30 – 80 km away from the Thai border town of Maesai, 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 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. Many of the villagers were drug-addicted, HIV-positive and worst of all the young generation was gone – the boys didn't stay long after the girls had left. Since three years PIN finances operational cost of the project.

The project coverage has grown to 14 villages with 463 households comprising 2,364 villagers of which 699 are younger than 18 years. 4 Sisters, 10 project staff and 9 volunteer take care of

- two nurseries with 56 children,
- a personal hygiene and food program for more than 50 children between 3 and 13 years of age
- supplemental school education for about 50 pupils of primary and middle school,
- a boarding house for 26 girls attending primary and middle schools,
- a 12 months vocational training program (sewing and handicrafts) for ten girls living in a separate boarding house at the compound,
- a clinic with an experienced full-time nurse, who in 2007 treated about 1,200 patients and sent 120 patients for further treatment to hospitals in Thailand,
- a counseling and support program for HIV/Aids patients with free HIV-treatment at Chiang Saen Hospital in Thailand
- seminars and workshops for drug users, HIV-AIDS patients, hygiene and for community development topics,
- a sewing and handicraft workshop to generate income opportunities for more than 100 women and girls in the surrounding villages.



**Nursery Yangon Ywar**



**Nursery Hway Thar 2**

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**Nutritional Program**



**Akha Village**

In addition, PIN supports 15 high-school students from the villages who attend High-Schools in the neighbouring cities of Thiri and Tachilek, in the State capital Kentung, and in Mandalay; PIN pays for the boarding and school fees.

**New Boarding House for Girls at GSS Compound, Yangon Ywar Village**

Many young girls from the remote villages would like to attend Primary and Middle Schools. To help the girls the Sisters arranged for the construction of a new boarding house for 60 girls. The new boarding house was officially opened in November 2007; the construction and the furniture were financed by the Kindermissionswerk "Sternsinger". We expect the boarding house to be fully occupied by June 2008 with the start of the new school year. PIN will assume the running cost for the new boarding house.



**New Boarding House Yangon Ywar**



**Middle School Boarding Girls**

**Water Supply for GSS Compound, Yangon Ywar Village**

To prevent water shortages in the dry season the villagers constructed a water pipeline and water tanks linking the GSS compound with the fresh water springs in the mountains 5km away. The construction work was completed in February 2007 and financed by PIN.

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**Water Pipeline Construction**



**Water Tank Construction**

**IV. Projects On Hold**

**Dhammasiri Hospital, Tachilek**

In 2005 PIN had donated the oxygen supply equipment for the new 200-bed Dhammasiri Hospital in Tachilek at the border with Thailand. The hospital was built by one of the most respected Shan monks: Ngagar Hnakaung Sayadaw Khrubar Seng Hlar. The hospital construction had been finished in 2006 already. However, at the end of 2007 the Myanmar government has not allowed its opening and operation yet and the potential supply of electricity from Thailand was still pending.



**Dhammasiri Hospital, Tachilek**



**Khrubar Seng Hlar**

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