

**PEOPLE IN NEED
GERHARD BAUMGARD STIFTUNG**

Report 2010: "Will Burma Ever Change?"

At the end of 2010 the political and economic situation is bleaker than ever. Every year we expect that life in Burma cannot deteriorate further but it can.

Despite the predictions of many that the fall of the military junta is imminent the government has weathered all international and domestic storms and navigated all cliffs. After the rigged elections of November 7, 2010 the military is firmly entrenched in their positions and does not bother to talk to any opposition leader, ethnic minority or the international community to alleviate tensions and achieve national unity.

Over the last two months it became obvious that the release of Peace Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest was just a publicity stunt to divert and deflect the criticism of the international community about the elections. In the first elections for 20 years the government party won about 80% of the available parliamentary seats; 25% had been allocated to the military beforehand already. With the resulting 85% overall parliamentary majority and the military men in civilian dresses fully in charge little change is to be expected over the next 5 years and beyond.

Prior to the elections the military privatized most of the state-owned properties, industries and licenses for mining, electricity, telecommunications, and infrastructure projects. Not surprisingly, a small elite group of businessmen - all on the international sanctions' lists - and the families of the ruling generals won the "auctions".

It is hard to find any rational argument for assuming that the military would capitulate in face of external – domestic or international - pressures. Why should the generals risk their and their families' political and financial interests and loosen their tight grip on power and become "benevolent" dictators.

With a 30 – 40% annual inflation rate the economy shrinks in real terms and the impoverishment of the population continues. To whom ever we talk we get the same answer year in and year out "the economy is so bad, it cannot get worse" but it can. With 80% of personal incomes spend on food, the health care and education sectors continuously deteriorating, electricity supply and infrastructure in tatters, and no social welfare systems most of the families live just one accident or one natural disaster away from absolute poverty; 90% of the population live on less than 65 cents (US-Dollars) a day.

Many families can only make ends meet by remittances from abroad. As travel restrictions for the Burmese have been loosened over the last years a large group of the population has migrated permanently or temporarily (legally or illegally) to the

neighboring countries. They work on jobs which allow them to send money home to support their struggling families in Burma.

In this desperate environment children go begging to support their siblings, students and single mothers are forced to work as prostitutes to finance their studies or to raise their children; corruption is rampant and PEOPLE IN NEED STIFTUNG (PIN) is confronted with ever increasing requests for support and help which go far beyond our capacity.

I. Our New Activities 2010

1. New Buildings

As you might recall from our earlier reports PIN tried to alleviate the situation of the orphans in Pathein. After the Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 the Catholic St. Mary's Orphanage for Girls had to accommodate 96 girls in an old colonial house where 35 girls lived prior to the Cyclone. The space situation was appalling and the girls between 3 years and 24 years needed urgent help. After many unsuccessful attempts to find a donor for a new additional building in 2009, the Bishop of Pathein and PIN decided to start the building without having the financing in place. In April 2010 the foundation stone was laid and construction began.

The optimism of Bishop John Hsane Gyi proved right and through the help of our friends at Steyler Mission in St. Augustin we received financial support from of Maria-Friedrich-Grundler Stiftung in Munich. In the end Maria-Friedrich-Grundler Stiftung contributed 2/3 and PIN 1/3 to the construction cost for the new two-storey concrete building. On September 12th, 2010 Bishop John blessed and inaugurated the new building and 40 girl orphans could move in. The other girls could finally spread out in the old building.



The New Building at St. Mary's Orphanage



Inauguration and Blessing by Bishop John

Earlier in 2010 our construction team had finished a boarding house for an education center for high-school girls in Kyaiklatt, about 30 km away from Pathein. Here we helped to arrange the financing from Miseror in Aachen.



New Boarding House in Kyaiklatt (Pathein)



Opening Ceremony

Now, the same construction team started to build a house for a nursery and boarding for university students in East Dagon Township of Yangon. The building will be managed by the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. PIN is a junior partner to Munich Aid, a German foundation, which works in Burma since several years.



Construction Site in East Dagon (Dec. 2010)



Brick Delivery with Burma-Style Truck

2. Nationalities Orphanage, Mandalay

PIN does not only help orphan girls. With our focus on youth and children in difficult situations we support the boys of the Nationalities Orphanage in Mandalay which is run by the Anglican Church. The boys are from the very remote area of Nagaland in the Northwest of Burma, close to the foothills of the Himalaya. The area is poor, under-

developed and does not offer schooling facilities other than some primary schools. In Mandalay the Orphanage gives 38 boys a safe place to live and study while they attend high-school.



Nationalities Orphanage: "Wash-Room"



Orphan Boy at Breakfast

In May 2010 we held a little fund-raiser in New York, organized by the members of the Episcopal Church of St. Luke in the Fields in Greenwich Village, and raised some money for the boys. Now, PIN works on implementing a new strategic concept for the orphanage which should help it to become self-sufficient in the medium term.

3. School in Chidup, Chin State

With the desperate situation in the villages and the secluded and remote areas of the hill tribes we witness that many villagers resign themselves to their fate of poverty and lack of education. However, there are examples of villagers showing initiative and not giving in.

One encouraging example is the small village of Chidup in the Chin State of Western Burma. When the authorities were unable to provide a school for the village children and the villagers could not find a donor for the US-\$ 4,000 primary school building the villagers took the fate of their children in their own hands. Under the leadership of the local priest they went to the forest, cut the wood and built a primary school for the 25 village children. In the end they only had to borrow about \$560 for the tin roof of the new school which PIN happily donated.



Chidup Promary School



School Children in Chidup

4. Leprosy Villages in Burma

The Maria-Friedrich-Grundler Stiftung which helped to finance the new building at the St. Mary's Orphanage for Girls in Patheingyi supports leprosy projects and children worldwide. Knowing that there are still many leprosy victims in Burma PIN further researched the topic in 2010.

Fighting Leprosy in Burma has a long history. The first Mission to Lepers was set up in Mandalay in 1891 by The Mission to Lepers in India. The Burmese government declared in 2003 that leprosy had been eradicated. However, still today 30 - 40% of the around 270,000 persons cured by the Multi Drug Therapy continue to live with Grade II disabilities and deformities. About 3,400 new cases of leprosy continue to be detected annually.

In this environment the social stigmatized and poor Persons Affected by Leprosy (PALs) with their visible deformities suffer most. The PALs have been evicted from the major population centers and live in enclaves on infertile land. They are neglected by the government and most international and national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The lepers mostly depend on the charitable help by the Christian churches and Buddhist monks.

PIN visited several of the leprosy enclaves and identified five projects in three leper communities which require urgent attention and funding. Low-cost houses in the leper villages close to Minbu and Pakokku in Central Burma and a nursery program for the children of the Minbu lepers are needed badly.



Leper Houses in Minbu ...



... and Pakokku

In the leprosy village close to Yenanthar a new dressing center for lepers with skin ulcers and a nursery building for the children is needed. Yenanthar is one of the biggest leprosy communities in Burma and has almost 3,000 inhabitants; it is about one hour drive away from the second-largest Burmese city of Mandalay where most of the lepers used to live before they were evicted. The current dressing center is a bamboo hut and does give much shelter during the monsoon season. Young Methodist volunteers set up a makeshift nursery in the open; it has to close during the monsoon from June to October.



Dressing Center in a Bamboo House



Open-Air Nursery in Yenanthar

II. Our Ongoing Projects

1. Nursery for Poor Children, Yangon

Since 2006 PIN runs a nursery in Downtown Yangon for 70 children with the help of the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters. Mostly, the children come from one of the poorest Yangon neighborhoods: Dala Township across the Yangon River from Yangon Downtown. The children are between 3 and 6 years old and are taken care of by four trained and

licensed lay nursery teachers and one helper working as a cook and maid. The children are mostly Buddhists and Hindus with only a handful of children from Christian and Muslim families. Most of the parents work as unskilled workers in the Yangon General Hospital which is close to the nursery; they drop the children in the morning and pick them up after work in the afternoon.

This year the operating cost of the nursery are generously supported by our friends of St. Luke in the Fields in New York. The nursery is free of charge and we provide free breakfast, lunch and clothing to the children. We ask the parents who can afford it for a contribution of 50 Cents (US\$) monthly. This small monthly fee of 50 Cents is saved to register the children at a government pre-school (private schools are strictly prohibited in Burma) once the children grow out of the nursery.

At the 2010 Christmas Party about 150 persons attended: all nursery children, their parents and their siblings. After a lot of singing and dancing all 70 nursery children got a new dress and toys as Christmas presents.



Christmas Party 2010 at the Yangon Nursery



Unpacking Christmas Presents

2. Vocational Training and Leadership Program for Young Women

For the 5th year PIN finances a vocational training program for 15 young women from different Burmese villages and towns. The program is managed by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Yangon and last twelve months. It comprises theoretical and practical training of professional skills, English language classes, and leadership formation.

The girls live together in an own building in the Convent's compound and are responsible for their daily life, including shopping, cooking, and cleaning. During the day they attend their theoretical and practical training at private education centers in Yangon. In the evenings and on weekends the Sisters provide additional courses on HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, nutrition, and leadership skills. During their free time on weekends and

during holidays the girls participate in exposure and outreach programs to help the poor, sick and marginalized people in Yangon hospitals and townships. After graduation from the one year program the girls return to their home villages and towns and engage in paid social work for NGOs or for the community's ministries for at least one year.

During the first four years of the program 53 girls attended the Leadership program. At present, 20 girls from the prior courses help their communities by working with social organizations, priests or religious groups, 17 girls work and earn their own living, 5 girls continue their studies at universities, and 4 girls got married and have their own families. To the other 7 girls we lost contact, some went abroad and others do not respond.

In August 2010 we finished the 4th program. After a graduation ceremony the girls returned to their home towns in Ayeyarwady and Bago Division (South), Mandalay Division (Central), Kayah and Shan State (East), and Kachin State (North).

In September 2010 15 girls joined the new program; they attend classes for sewing (3), nurse aid and pharmacology (5), boarding house management and administration (1), computer and accounting (2), English and nursery teacher (3), and computer and English (1). The current program (#5) runs from September 1st, 2010 until August 31st, 2011.



Graduation Ceremony of Batch#4



Christmas Dinner with Batch#5

3. Rehabilitation Program in Eastern Shan State

PIN supports the rehabilitation and education project for hill-tribes in Eastern Shan State, close to the border of Myanmar and Thailand (so-called 'Golden Triangle') for more than five years. The project for the Akha Hill-tribe had been started by Catholic nuns 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 most of the young generation had left the villages.

Finally, we see some significant changes: the children grow up with nurseries and care and they attend school successfully. The parents realize the benefits of education and as the income generation program is taking off the villages get more prosperous. The villagers can increase their contributions for the education of their children and PIN can slowly decrease its annual financial contribution.

After some strategic adjustments the project today covers 14 villages with 2,364 villagers of which 699 are younger than 18 years. 4 Good Shepherd Sisters, 13 project staff and 7 field workers work for the project.

The staff takes care of

- two nurseries with 100 children



Nursery I in Yangon Ywar



Nursery II in Hway Thar Two

- supplemental school education for 60 boys and girls attending primary, middle, and high school,
- a boarding house with 58 girls attending primary, middle or high school,
- a twelve-month vocational training program (sewing and handicrafts) for up to 12 girls living in a separate boarding house at the compound,
- a sewing and handicraft workshop with commissioned work to generate income opportunities for women and girls in the surrounding villages.

4. Buddhist Ye Lai Monastery, Yangon

As you might recall from earlier reports PIN completed two new buildings for the Buddhist Ye Lai Monastery in Yangon in 2009. The monastery looks after HIV/AIDS patients since several years. Unfortunately, once the new buildings were opened Military Intelligence and the Ministry of Health prohibited the monastery to take care of HIV/AIDS patients and evicted the resident patients.

The situation in 2010 only marginally improved. Although PIN is now allowed to visit the Monastery again only a small number of male HIV/AIDS patients is allowed to stay for a few days each in the houses. The young chief monk tries to make the best use of the otherwise empty buildings by entertaining seminars and giving lectures.



New Buildings for HIV/AIDS Patients at Ye Lai



Chief Monk, Sayadaw U Kondala

III. Other Activities

As in previous years PIN sponsors the school education of some children, arranges for medical treatments, helps to arrange the visits of international medical teams to Burma and supports local organizations by writing project proposals and finding international donors.



Girl with Meningocele Before Surgery



Baby Girl After Cleft-Lip Surgery

IV. Contacts

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PEOPLE IN NEED – GERHARD BAUMGARD STIFTUNG is a registered charity in the State of Hesse (Germany) which is monitored by the State Board of Control. PIN can issue donation receipts which are tax-deductible in Germany.

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