

Report 2013

**Myanmar: Do traffic jams point towards a brighter future for all?**

Arriving in Yangon one gets the impression that the country has undergone dramatic changes in the last two years. Traffic is buzzing and is as bad as in Bangkok or Jakarta. The car models have changed from last-century-built ones to relatively new (second-hand) models, property prices have skyrocketed and office rents peaked at Manhattan levels of \$100 per square feet/month. While I could rent a top-of-the-line 2-bedroom apartment in 2010 for \$800 a month, the price for the same apartment today is \$5,500 a month, and the apartments are fully booked with a long waiting list!

As businesses and tourists flock into the country, embassies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) staff up their offices, the quiet backwater place of the past has turned into a bustling metropolis of more than 6 million people. But this only holds true for the major cities of Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyidaw. The smaller towns have seen little change and the villages and the countryside outside of the main tourist centers are still frozen in time: no electricity, a bad infrastructure, and bullock carts and bicycles still dominate the roads.



Traffic in Yangon has gotten bad and ...



... used car dealerships have popped up everywhere



The 1950s car models disappear ...



... but most people have to rely on public transport



Outside of Yangon bullock carts are a common site ...



... and families go by trishaw

It will be difficult to reconnect Myanmar with the global economy, a view which is shared by the World Bank. In its recent 2014 Annual Report of Doing Business it ranks Myanmar as 182<sup>nd</sup> of 189 countries surveyed; only countries such as Eritrea, Congo, Libya, South Sudan, and Chad are considered worse for business activities. Progress in Myanmar will continue to be slow as the administrative procedures are long and cumbersome and prices for energy and electricity are the highest in the region. And, in Myanmar, entrepreneurs are required to deposit the incredible amount of \$58,000 before they can officially register their own company.

### I. People in Need New Activities in 2013

Despite the changes mentioned above, certainly, traffic congestion is not an indicator of imminent or future prosperity for all. Ubiquitous poverty, a disastrous level of education, and a severe shortage of professional skills prevail everywhere. Myanmar's average annual income per capita is still at \$835 according to the World Bank. Therefore, People In Need (PIN) continues its mission and projects without waning.

In 2013, we were able to join forces with other international donors, start new projects, and share project costs. This change has been possible as an increasing number of international donors have "discovered" Myanmar. As Myanmar opened up to the Western World it became easier for international NGOs to register with the government and to work and move more freely than under the former military junta. As a result more international NGOs are able to enter the country, see the huge challenges and needs, and start social projects and help to promote civil society. In 2013, we successfully introduced international donors to new social projects.

These efforts resulted in financial support for:

- The first Catholic Private High School in Myanmar: The Bishop of Pathein will build a private high school for 300 students in Pathein,

- Refurbishment of two orphanages in Pathein:
  - The 38 boys of St. Bruno Orphanage finally will get a new building and can move out of the crumbling old house, and
  - The 100-year old wobbly and decaying colonial building of St. Mary's Orphanage for girls will be refurbished benefitting 50 young girls.
  
- The village of Kanyinthonesint (about 70 miles from Yangon in Ayeyarwaddy Division) will get its first nursery school run by the Sisters of Charity,
  
- A vocational training center in Hlaing Thayar (Yangon): The Salesian Brothers will build a new center and start professional training for 50 boys who dropped out of school or lived on the streets,
  
- A support program for 20 single mothers, abandoned girls, and street walkers in Mandalay.

People In Need got directly involved in these projects by acting as a liaison between donors and the local beneficiaries and by monitoring the realization of the projects goals. In most projects we will also join as a junior partner and will contribute to the project expenses.

## 1. St. John High School, Pathein

By all international standards, the school education system in Myanmar is poor and its quality is far below the level of the neighboring countries. Burmese education, at both school and university levels, has suffered badly from decades of political unrest and military dictatorship, with academics and students seen as threats by the regime. The education system has almost been destroyed by half a century of military rule and by the nationalization of all missionary and private schools fifty years ago.

The new civilian government which took office in 2011 is trying to imbue change in the country and in particular its education sector. The government acknowledges now and sees the need for radical change in education. First steps have been taken to improve the dire situation in schools and universities. The government has made room for academic freedom and for cooperation with the non-governmental institutions to tackle a wide range of tasks.

In a change of policy the Ministry of Education is prepared to grant operating licenses for private schools with a Burmese curriculum. This had not been possible since 1964 when all schools were nationalized and put under state control. The only exception had been some Buddhist monasteries which were allowed to operate monastic primary schools in rural areas and recently, some private schools with a strictly English curriculum were tolerated to operate (without official recognition) in the major cities.

## Education in Pathein

Due to the declining economic, social and educational situation, many students drop out of school or do not pass their final high school exams (11<sup>th</sup> grade exam). Given this situation, the Catholic diocese of Pathein decided to put a priority on the education of its children and youth about 15 years ago. During the last decade the diocese worked hard to achieve a high level of standardized Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary, Middle and High School education to support poor and qualified students with the cooperation of parents. Parish Education Workers (PEWs) and Village Education Workers (VEWs) and Catholic teachers have educated, trained and empowered both parents and students alike independent of religion and race.



St. Peter Cathedral in Pathein

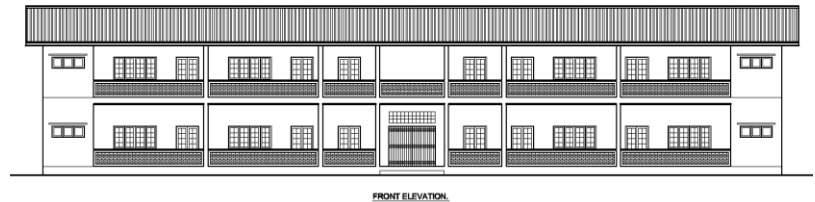
As the government has loosened its grip on the high school monopoly of the state, the Catholic diocese of Pathein has applied for the license to build and operate a private middle and high school in Pathein in order to improve the situation for the youth and ensure a high level of education. We are confident that the State Educational Ministry of the Ayeyarwady Division will grant the license for the private high school. The new St. John High School will be the first Catholic High School in the whole of Myanmar since all the missionary schools were nationalized in the 1960s.

The new Catholic private school should accommodate between 200 – 300 children. The children will come from different backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups and localities. The poor and needy, yet hardworking students who demonstrate talent and potential will be given an opportunity also. A strong and definitive criterion will be developed for admittance to the school. It is vital that we allow access to the school for students based on their ability and not on their economic situation.

St. John High School will start in the Myanmar academic year 2014 (June 2014) with the lower classes of 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Middle School) in temporary quarters. Once the new high school building is completed in 2015 the classes for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the 10<sup>th</sup> grade (High School) will be added.



Temporary School Building



New Building for the Private High School

PIN is confident that the St. John High School will be successful and will attain its main objectives:

- To make changes to the existing school system in Myanmar so that the children may gain substantial education for their future.
- To provide new opportunities for talented poor children who are normally deprived of the basic right to education. Students from poor families will be supported by scholarships.
- To accept students into the school on equal and fair selection criteria.

The new high school building will be finished in 2015; 50% of the construction costs are secured already. The operating expenses of the private school will be financed by the school fees of the students. The school budget will be break-even after Year 3, i.e. in 2017.

## 2. St. Bruno Orphanage

St. Bruno Orphanage for boys was established in 1993 by the Little Brothers of St. Francis Xavier (SFX) in a village tract of Pathein. It started with 5 orphans and grew to 38 boys in 2013. The SFX brothers work in twelve different dioceses in Myanmar; they found many orphans in their mission areas and sent them to the orphanage in Pathein. Over the past twenty years the orphanage has been relocated several times due to the lack of a permanent building. In 2012, it moved back to the original site which it had occupied in 1998. This place had been recognized by the government as an orphanage and it has plenty of space for gardening and pig-breeding. Unfortunately, the area close to the orphanage is used as a rubbish dump for the town of Pathein. We hope that the garbage site will disappear soon as a Japanese company has agreed with the City of Pathein to recycle the garbage for methane generation.

The 38 boys are between 4 and 24 years of age. Some go to Kindergarten, 3 to university and the rest attend school. Two brothers care for the orphans and live with them while providing guidance and help for their education and studies. The boys attend the state schools but receive additional teaching and tutorial lessons from the brothers. In addition, the brothers also instruct the boys on morality and good citizenship to strengthen the character and spirituality of the young boys. The brothers help the poor relatives in sharing in the costs of accommodation, education fees, health care and other expenses. Two kitchen helpers prepare the food for the boys and under the guidance of the brothers the boys grow vegetables in the large garden and breed pigs to complement the daily diet.

Unfortunately, the building is in very poor condition and the orphan community is in urgent need of better housing. The building is small, the roof is leaking in the rainy season, and the windows, walls and floors are decaying; the adjacent kitchen and dining room can no longer resist wind and rain. The condition of the house is unsafe and harmful to the health and well-being of the children both physically and mentally.



The crumbling and mouldy house of St. Bruno Orphanage

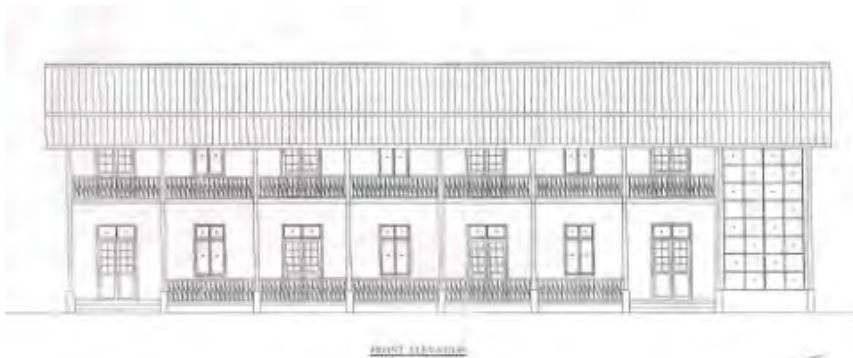
With a new building, the children will have a decent and safe place to live and a better environment for learning and studying. People In Need together with two other donors (USA and Asia) will finance the new building for the orphans. Construction will start in early 2014 and the new building should be ready before the monsoon season will start at the end of May.



Boys at St. Bruno



Dormitory



Sketch of new building

### 3. St. Mary Orphanage

St. Mary Orphanage for Girls is located in the centre of Pathein, just 5 minutes away from the Diocese’s Cathedral and the Mother House of the Francis Xavier Sisters (SFX). All schools are in close proximity and also near the General Hospital of Pathein.

St. Mary Orphanage was established in 1988. The land and an old colonial house built around 1920 were donated to the SFX sisters by an Anglo-Burmese family in 1988 as they left Burma. The donation was conditioned on the house being used as an orphanage for girls. Currently four sisters plus kitchen staff and some caretakers are caring for the 93 orphan girls. They are helped by the older orphan girls; some of them have finished their formal education as nursery or primary school teachers and nurse aids. The sisters live with the orphans and act as mothers. They organize and oversee the girls’ education from nursery school to primary school, and further education also. In 1998, the Diocese built in the back of the large property a seniors’ home where the elderly and retired SFX sisters live. Although they live separately from the orphans they share in the water supply of the compound.

You might recall that in 2010, PIN and a Munich Foundation built and financed a new house at the St. Mary Orphanage for Girls at Pathein. After the devastation caused by

Cyclone Nargis (2008, the orphanage became way too small to accommodate the additional victims of the natural disaster. The number of orphan girls had grown from 42 girls before the cyclone to 93 girls.

With the additional building, we are pleased to report that the living situation for the 40 older girls has improved significantly. However, the old colonial building with the 50 younger girls now requires urgent attention. The two-storey colonial house, built nearly 100 years ago, measures about 50 by 80 feet (15 by 24 meters) and has deteriorated significantly due to poor maintenance and lack of money. The house is in poor condition and shows some structural deficiencies; some of the old wooden beams have rotted or have been partially eaten by white ants. The in-house toilets are broken, the wooden floorboards of the upper floor are wobbly and insecure, and the roof is leaking. In short, the house needs urgent refurbishment and renovation.



Colonial House at St. Mary Orphanage



Orphan girls and Sisters



Washroom and ...



... kitchen in the old house

In addition, the overhead water tank for the compound has to be replaced by a new 3,500 gallons water tank. The old water tank, already damaged by Cyclone Nargis, has developed serious leakage after a small earth quake in 2012. Currently, the 150 persons



living in the total compound rely on the water collected during the rainy season plus on a timeworn well. Both, the water tank and the well do not provide enough fresh water during the long dry season.



The tube-well is not working well

People In Need introduced an international donor to the Sisters who indicated its willingness to take up the lion's share of the refurbishment cost of the colonial building and to fund a new water tank.

#### 4. Nursery School in Kanyinthonesint

Kanyinthonesint is a typical rice farming village, located on the main road from Pathein to Yangon about 35 miles away from Pathein in Kyaungkone Township, Ayeyawady Division. Most of the people living here are ethnic Karen and Buddhists. About half of the total households are small scale farmers who rely on the subsistence farming of monsoon paddy, beans and ground-nuts. About 20% of the population own some small parcels of land and grow cassava, banana, sugarcane, flowers, betel-nuts, etc. They supplement household income as farm workers. Most of the households keep some livestock (chicken, duck, and pigs) for own consumption.

Kanyinthonesint village has a primary school only and no nursery school. Many children only receive a basic primary school education as families cannot afford to send their children to attend a middle or high school in the next towns: Kyaungkone (about 10 miles), Hinthada (30 miles), and Pathein (35 miles).

Burmese education, at both lower and higher levels, has suffered badly from decades of political unrest, with academics and students seen as threats to the regime. The education system has been destroyed by half a century of military rule. The cycle of poverty is such that the parents are focused on their own livelihood and not necessarily on the education or the future livelihood of their children. Sadly, in this environment many parents do not even understand the value of education and the influence it will have on the future well-being of their children. It is to this extent that the diocese wants

to set up a nursery school for the 3 to 6 year-old village children. The Sisters of Charity, who have opened a convent at the parish center, will operate the nursery school for the children and offer social services to the villagers.

The nursery in Kanyinthonesint will be open for both Catholic and non-Catholic children of the community with a range of programs designed to prepare children for entering continuing education at State schools. The activities, which will be run by the sisters will include: games and puzzles, basic writing, spelling, reading and calculations, as well as personal hygiene instruction and training of other life skills. Annually, the nursery school will benefit at least 40 children of the surrounding 5 villages. After completing the nursery school the children will be better prepared for state primary school education and the parents should see the benefits of education for their children.

The Sisters of Charity will run the nursery school with volunteer teachers and will ensure an efficient and successful outcome with regards to the education of the children. They will make certain sure that the young children will experience a positive life in a social environment outside of their families, while also learning, how to get along with others. These lessons and the nursery school attendance will instil in the children self-confidence and responsibility and foster happiness for their future success. Of course, the children attending will be the main beneficiaries of the nursery school but indirectly the parents and the other members of the community will benefit as well.



Sisters of Charity a Kanyinthonesint



Building Plot for the Nursery School

Jointly with the diocese and other international benefactors PIN will donate the nursery building. The Sisters of Charity plus the villagers will take responsibility for the running cost of the nursery school.

## 5. Vocational Training Center in Hlaing Thayar

In 2013 we established a working relationship with the Salesian Brothers “Don Bosco” in Myanmar. During the Burmese school holidays 2013 (March to May) we sponsored a

summer workshop for youth in Yangon. The workshop included English courses, piano and guitar lessons, games, and holiday outings.



Summer workshop at Don Bosco: Guitar ...



... and English training

We liked the work of the Salesians Brothers, their focus on street-children, and vocational training for poor youth and we got actively involved in the fund-raising for a new vocational training center. The Brothers want to establish a vocational training center for different trades in Hlaing Thayar, a township to the west of Yangon. Here they own a large plot of land for the training center.

The planned training center will help 45 – 50 youths between 18 and 25 years old to receive a basic education and learn a professional trade such as mechanics, welding, engineering, computer technology, and printing. The education will be non-formal and focus on school drop-outs, street children, and boys who could not finish school because of poverty or because of discrimination due to race or religion. The large two-storey training center (200 feet by 50 feet) will include training facilities, classrooms, study hall, dormitory, offices, and a recreational room.



Envisioned Vocational Training Center



Building Site in Hlaing Thayar

The Brothers will organize the education and training of the boys with own teachers who attended professional and technical training in the Philippines and external

instructors. The sustainability of the project will be secured by own income and by the congregation.

With the help of PIN the Salesian Brothers were able to secure all of the construction cost for the vocational training center. The construction should commence once the final building permit will be issued by the Hlaing Thayar township authority. We expect that the approval will be given shortly.

## 6. Boarding House for Girls in Mandalay

As we reported in 2012 a strong earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale struck Myanmar's Mandalay region in November 2012. In Mandalay, the earthquake damaged the boarding house for high-school girls of the Good Shepherd Sisters. We had just extended the boarding house by a second floor in 2011. Here about 40 girls live under the supervision of the Good Shepherd Sisters and receive private tuition classes in addition to their high-school education. After the earthquake the walls showed cracks and the water tank was damaged. Structurally, it was not safe anymore for the girls to stay on the second floor. In 2013 PIN repaired the building, checked its structural safety, and restored the water tank.



The boarding house in Mandalay Myothit

In a further effort to improve the living conditions of the girls we replaced the very heavy wooden bunk beds by 20 lightweight metal bunk beds. Now all the 40 girls can sleep on the upper floor of the house and use the ground floor for dining and studying only. In the past, only half of the wooden beds could be put on the upper floor, the other half had to stay downstairs due to the heavy weight of the beds. The new lightweight beds have solved this issue and contributed to a better quality of living for the girls.



PIN replaced the heavy wooden bunk beds...



with lightweight metal beds

**Background of the Boarding house:** The Burmese education system is under-developed and in the rural areas students have difficulties to find high-schools close to their home villages. As a consequence, many students are forced to attend high-schools in the bigger cities and stay away from home in boarding houses. Of course, girls are most vulnerable and it is hard to find a safe house for the three years of high-school study. In Mandalay the demand is exceptionally high. Here the Good Shepherd Sisters have operated a safe boarding house for girls since 2004. The Sisters take an active role and engage in the education of the girls. They supervise their learning and homework, as well as organize tutorial classes. The positive result is a high success rate with the girls' final exams.

## **7. Support Program for Vulnerable Women**

At the convent in Central Mandalay the Good Shepherd Sisters started a vocational program for vulnerable young women: single mothers, school drop-outs, victims of Cyclone Nargis, streetwalkers. The vocational centre provides training for 20 girls who were living in difficult circumstances, faced abuse and lived in fear of trafficking.

The main activities of the program are:

1. Sewing skills and the making of traditional handicrafts, bags and cards
2. Regular spiritual meditation to help in the healing for those who have suffered abuse and been exploited
3. Management skills in cooking, shopping and selling the products and team work
4. Social activities
5. Music, singing and dancing lessons and adult literacy
6. Health and personal hygiene education
7. General knowledge, language and computer classes

The Sisters want to provide a safe and enriching environment for vulnerable women and children so they may be given the opportunity to live safe and happy in the community. In the program the women explore their existing strengths and capacities through

vocational training and an income generating program. They learn about gender equality, human development, social support and take part in inter-religious dialogue.

The program requires adequate

- Accommodation / living quarters for the 20 girls who live in the convent
- Workshop for the vocational training activities, in particular for the sewing machines
- A shop for selling the products to generate income and secure the sustainability of the program.



The girls and the Sisters



The Sewing Workshop



The extension for the workshop



Heavy construction work is a women's job

PIN helps the Sisters in raising funds for the program; we have donated a building extension of the workshop for the vocational training.

## II. Event: Christmas Festivities for 160 Orphans in Pathein

One of the 2013 highlights was the Christmas Celebration for 160 orphans in the city of Pathein about 200 km west of Yangon in the Ayeyarwady Division.

For the first time 160 orphans of three Catholic orphanages celebrated Christmas together: 93 girls of St. Mary, 30 boys of the Family Home and 38 boys of St. Bruno. Under the patronage of Bishop John Hsane Gyi the festivities started at 6 pm with a joint dinner, followed by performances prepared by the orphans, dances, songs, and presents for all children. The huge party ended with games and more food late in the evening. Even the youngest girls and boys of 3 and 4 years partied tirelessly until 11 pm.



The children performed plays, songs, and dances



The children enjoyed the show ...



... as did Bishop John



The Christmas dinner was good and bounteous and everybody got plenty

### III. Ongoing Projects Nursery School for Poor Children in Yangon

Since 2006 the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters run a nursery school in Downtown Yangon for 60-70 children. The nursery school has been founded by PIN and is fully financed by us. Mostly, the children come from one of the poorest Yangon neighborhoods: Dala Township across the Yangon River opposite from Yangon Downtown. The children are between 3 and 6 years old and are taken care of four trained and licensed nursery teachers and one cook and maid. The majority of the nursery children are from Buddhist and Hindu families with a few Christian or Muslim children. Many parents work as unskilled workers in Yangon General Hospital, some sell beetle nuts, others run small food stalls; they drop the children at the nursery in the morning and pick them up after work. Most parents earn less than \$2 a day and the nursery is free for the poor and we provide a free lunch and clothing for all children.



Waiting to wash hands before lunch



Lunch time





Playing and ...



.. sleeping after lunch

Christmas 2013 we again celebrated our annual party for the nursery children, their brothers and sisters, and their parents. All nursery children received presents and had great fun in singing, in dancing, and in performing the Christmas story. The parents were very proud to see their children happy and joyful. After the party children, parents, and visitors enjoyed free food and drinks before we closed the nursery for the Christmas holidays.



The parents proudly watch their children ...



... singing Christmas carols, and ...



... playing the Christmas story.



Partying makes hungry

## Vocational Training and Leadership Program for Young Women

For seven years PIN has run and financed a vocational training program for young women from Burmese villages. The program is managed by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Yangon and lasts twelve months. In September 2013, 19 girls started Batch#8 of the training program; the girls are from different parts of Myanmar, of different ethnic races, and of different religions. While in Yangon the girls attend professional training courses of nurse aide and pharmacology, nursery teacher or dressmaking and sewing. All receive English and computer training lessons and participate in ethics education and leadership formation classes.

For the girls we rented a 2 storey house in the compound of the Good Shepherd Sisters' Convent; here the girls are responsible for all aspects of their daily life, including shopping, cooking, laundry, and cleaning. During daytime they attend the professional training courses; in the evenings and on weekends the Sisters provide additional lessons on ethics, diseases, human trafficking, nutrition, and leadership skills. During their free time and during holidays the girls participate in exposure and outreach programs to help the poor, sick and marginalized people in hospitals and townships around Yangon. After graduation from the one year program the girls return to their home villages and towns and should engage in social work for NGOs or for the community's ministries.



The girls of Batch#7 in front of their house ...



... and during the Graduation Ceremony

In August 2013 we finished Batch#7 of the leadership program. After the graduation ceremony the girls returned to their home towns in different parts of Myanmar. The 19 girls of Batch#8 are from Kachin State in the North of Myanmar (1), from Mandalay Division (Central, 1), from Shan State (East, 1) from Kayah State (East, 3), from Rakhine State (West, 2), from Bago Division (South, 2), from Ayeyarwady Division (Southwest, 7), and from Yangon Division (South, 2).



Christmas Party 2013 with ...



Sister Eunan, our fabulous program manager

### The Buddhist Ye Lai Monastery for HIV-patients in Yangon

In 2009 PIN built two houses for HIV/AIDS-patients at the Buddhist Ye Lai Monastery in Yangon in 2009. On average 60 – 70 HIV-patients and their relatives stay at the monastery; they come to Yangon in the hope of receiving medical treatment and medicines here. Still today free HIV-treatment is only available at a small number of government hospitals and international NGOs in the major cities and waiting lists are long.



The two houses built by PIN

While the patients who are mostly penniless and destitute wait for the results of the medical tests and medicines, the monastery offers food and shelter. Some patients just stay a couple of days to collect their monthly ration of ARV-drugs, others have to stay for months to complete tests and wait for their turn to receive the life-saving drugs.

With the number of HIV-victims still increasing and ARV-drugs in limited supply the monasteries such as the Ye Lay monastery offer an essential and vital service to the impoverished sick. Here the jobless HIV-patients who cannot afford to stay anywhere else find a safe haven and dry place, and receive food while waiting for a treatment which is not available in their hometowns.



Persons living with HIV/AIDS



Baby born in the monastery

Traditionally, the monks of the monastery collect alms in the neighborhood each morning. However, the collection is rarely enough to feed all monks and patients and PIN regularly donates food to the monastery.



Young monks



Good Shepherd Sisters visit the Monastery

To further improve the scarce food supply PIN also filled up barren swamp land in the monastery compound in 2012 and 2013 to be used as a garden. The new garden supplements the daily menu, gives some meaningful work for the HIV-patients, and contributes to their mental wellbeing.



The new garden at the monastery



The Buddhist Chief Monk in his garden

After being used continuously by a high number of HIV-patients for 5 years the two houses show some wear and tear. The roof leaks during the rainy season and the kitchen, toilets, and washrooms have to be refurbished. We will start the renovation in 2014.



Worn-out dormitory at the monastery ...



... and kitchen need urgent renovation

#### IV. Initiative for 2014: New Income Generation Project

Over the years, PIN has attempted to enhance the income of poor and needy women in the Burmese villages with various programs including the creation of local traditional handicraft products. Yet recently, we have come to realize that this route of income-generation, through traditional handicraft products of our Burmese projects is limited and returns are diminishing. Western demand for the Fair Trade Programs with country-typical handicrafts is decreasing and the market is saturated with products of sameness.

Facing the dilemma of declining traditional handicraft exports to Europe and the Western World we explored possibilities to produce European textile designs in Asia.

After roaming shops and villages we singled out hand-woven fabrics as a promising field for future activity. Traditionally, Thailand and Myanmar have a long tradition in hand-weaving of cotton fabrics. In fact, in some areas each village household operates its own loom. Accordingly, the skill level of the weavers is high and the quality of the fabric excellent.

In Europe the craft of hand-weaving has almost vanished and the few hand-crafted products from European sources are unaffordable. Our goal is to design and create Western clothing, which will be woven and sewn utilizing Asian fair trade project fabrics. We plan to produce apparel and other accessories that will have an appeal to the taste level of the German/European consumers and in turn, done properly, will drive demand and create a market. To enhance the idea of producing high quality pieces made from hand-woven fabric as a viable option for the income generation project, PIN has engaged a young talented German fashion designer, working with the German Good Shepherd Sisters, to explore the design of hand-woven clothing. The income from this exciting initiative should benefit the weavers and seamstresses at the local level.

To test out plan, we started a pilot project in Nong Khai, Thailand at the border with Laos, in September 2013. Here, the Thai Good Shepherd Sisters operate a huge income generation, agricultural and education project in more than 40 villages which includes, for 33 years, weaving and sewing since 33 years. The first prototype samples from the weaving and sewing project worked out quite well. Yet, when we tried to create some scale to the project, we encountered a basic challenge: The weavers and seamstresses were not able to manufacture identical and consistent quality and quantities in a given timeframe.

We have come to recognize that we must re-evaluate the manufacturing processes and start a dedicated training and production center from scratch. We will need to invest in the selection and the training of our manufacturing team. To this extent we will try a new start in Myanmar this year. Compared to Thailand, a production in Myanmar has the advantage that the import of textile products into the European Union is free of customs duty.

Even if we are able to solve the production issues and master the administrative hurdles of shipping textile products from Burmese villages to Europe we will face the enormous challenge of setting up an efficient and effective sales and marketing network in Germany. Although the hurdles with the fabric project are steep, in the end the project benefits outweigh the difficulties which are to help the penniless women in the villages of Myanmar.

## Note of Gratitude

With the unceasing help of our friends and supporters and with lots of good fortune, People In Need fared much better in 2013 than expected. People In Need continued its established ventures successfully and initiated several new projects which should come to full fruition in 2014.

We would like to express our gratitude to our friends, supporters, and donors for your continuous support and interest in our work in Myanmar. On behalf of the children, youth, orphans and other beneficiaries of the projects and initiatives of People In Need we would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your unceasing generosity and contribution towards the foundation.

January 2014

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