

## Report 2017

### Myanmar: Disillusionment after Euphoria

It did not take long. Two years ago, the Western World celebrated Myanmar's resurrection from decades of brutal military dictatorship. In the 2015 election the National League for Democracy swept away the army-controlled government and won about 80% of the available parliament seats. With the overwhelming popularity of its revered leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD took over the government on national, divisional, and municipal levels.

After a year of disappointments, the fairy-tale emergence from darkness has come to a halt. Hope for peace, economic development and for a transition to democracy vanished. It became apparent, that the de facto President Aung San Suu Kyi doesn't have any authority and control over military, police, and security. In addition to controlling 25% of parliament seats, the Generals are solely responsible for the Ministries of Defense, Interior and Border Areas.

In 2017 more than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims fled to Bangladesh, they fled from murder, rape, and arson committed by the Myanmar army and police. The U.N. special envoy on human rights in Myanmar, Mrs. Yanghee Lee, says these acts of appalling barbarity bear "the hallmarks of a genocide". But State Counsellor and Peace Nobel Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi remained mute about the witness reports of ethnic cleansing by the army, police and local Buddhist militia.



Rakhine Buddhist monks hold up an anti-Rohingya sign at a demonstration at Shwedagon Pagoda  
(BBC News in Pictures – AFP photo)

In the 'Myanmar Year of Peace' (2017) the fighting between the ethnic armies and the Myanmar military intensified in Kachin and Shan States displacing thousands of civilians. Despite the massive investments of European Governments into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Peace Conference the envisioned nationwide ceasefire agreement didn't progress. The ethnic armies don't want to give up their quest for more autonomy and don't want to unconditionally surrender to the Myanmar Military prior to any political talks about a lasting peace.

The change of economic policies is precariously slow. The new Myanmar Companies Law 2017 fell short of expectations. The transitional procedures are not determined yet and will cause a yearlong uncertainty. With the same bureaucratic apparatus as under military rule in place there is hardly any reason to be optimistic.

As Myanmar is back in the headlines for the wrong reasons, it is not surprising that business felt the first negative effects. The number of tourists declines and the euphoria in the tourist sector is replaced by a more somber view. The political uncertainty and the sluggish changes of economic policies have slowed down foreign investments. All this will negatively affect the economic outlook for this dirt-poor country and its residents.

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### **PEOPLE IN NEED Activities 2017**

As the hope for immediate improvements in the living situation of many Burmese dwindles, PEOPLE IN NEED (PIN) intensified its work for socially and economically disadvantaged children and youth in Myanmar.

#### **1. Myinttamon Kindergarten For HIV-affected Children, Mandalay**

PIN leased a plot of land from the Methodist Theological College in the center of Mandalay. Here we built a new kindergarten. The kindergarten exclusively cares for children affected with HIV and children from HIV-affected families. It is managed by the Good Shepherd Sisters, Mandalay and PIN takes care of all expenses including the lease of the land.



Myinttamon Kindergarten



The Children Arrive by Ferry

In June 2017, we started the second year with 25 children. The children are between 3 and 6 years old and require intensive care and support; they are taken care of by three nursery teachers and one cook/helper. The teachers offer child-centered education following the Montessori Method. They are licensed by the Myanmar government and have completed a private Montessori training.

The Kindergarten children live across Mandalay and in the morning, we collect the children by car and in the afternoon, we drive them back to their homes. Weekdays, the children arrive around nine o'clock, they start the day in the nursery with an opening song. After drawing and painting they sit down for a short meditation session. In the morning they learn English words, sing songs and nursery rhymes, practice writing, play music and dance. After the free lunch

they will rest. In the afternoon the children play games inside the house or outside on our playground.



Learning English Words



Playing Outside

The children enthusiastically prepared an entertaining and enjoyable program for the 2017 Christmas Celebration in the Kindergarten. They presented songs and dance to their proud parents who happily attended the Christmas party.



Christmas Celebration 2017: Singing



Waiting for their Turn

## 2. Empowering Girls and Young Women

Gender bias remains deeply entrenched in the Burmese society. Women often suffer violence. Discrimination hinders girls and young women to have access to basic education, health care, and decent work at fair wages. PIN has committed to assist the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters in expanding their Support for Vulnerable Girls and Young Women in Myanmar.

Together with the Good Shepherd Sisters we had started a Leadership and Vocational Training to empower girls and young vulnerable women in Yangon in 2006. Since then we help the Sisters to educate and train about 220 girls in 12-month classes.



With the donation of a major international charity, we completed the “Rose Virginie Women Empowerment Center” of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Mandalay. A new four-story building together with an existing two-story house increased the training and accommodation capacity for vulnerable girls. The Center now provides accommodation for 50 young women, as well as space for sisters, counselors, and trainers. Additionally, the Empowerment Center offers day training activities and seminars for residents and vulnerable young women and girls from the neighboring areas.

## Center of Education and Training for the Empowerment of Women

Mandalay Myo Thit  
Myanmar



In July 2016 we moved the 11<sup>th</sup> Class of the Leadership and Vocational Training Program from Yangon to the new Center in Mandalay Myothit. In Mandalay, we follow the same format as we did with the successful program in Yangon: 20 girls with different ethnic roots and from different Myanmar areas live and study together for one year. PIN contributes the major part of the operating expenses of the program. To the extent possible, the girls and their parents give a small, more symbolic contribution for the 12-month training.

The young women of Class 11 were trained in English language and computer skills and 11 students had joined the sewing training. In addition to the professional trainings, the young women attend seminars and awareness programs on Migration and Human Trafficking, HIV/AIDS, Leadership and Management, Ethical Values, and communications skills. The girls celebrate birthdays, religious feasts, national days and special occasions together and learn to respect and value different religions and cultural values. In exposure programs the girls learn to build relationships and to network. Towards the end of the study year the young women will practise and enhance their skills as trainees in companies and NGOs.



Computer Class



Sewing Class

In July 2017 the young women of Class 11 graduated and returned to their home villages in Irrawaddy, Mandalay, and Sagaing Divisions, and Kachin, Kayah and Shan States. As a “compensation” for the free training in the Empowerment Center the girls continued to work with social organizations or train young girls in their home areas for 1 -2 years.

In July 2017 we started the 12<sup>th</sup> Class of the Leadership and Vocational Training Program. For the first time we included a Beauty Course with Hair Dressing and Make-Up in the vocational training. While the English & Computer Class and the Sewing Training last one year, the Beauty training takes 6 months. We accepted a total of 25 girls between 17 and 25 years. 5 girls attend the Beauty Training, 9 girls joined the English and Computer Class and 11 girls get Sewing Training. As in all classes before, the girls come from socially disadvantaged families from villages all over Myanmar. The students are trained by qualified English teachers, computer and sewing trainers and by a qualified beautician. Three Sisters see to the young women and manage the Center. Volunteers, friends, and the staff of the Good Shepherd Sisters support the girls and the program actively.



The New Beauty Parlor



Hairdressing Course

For the Hairdressing and Make-up program we built a small Beauty Parlor which was financed by a donation of German Haircare company Schwarzkopf. The first 6-month Beauty Course was an overwhelming success. During the first three months the five students learned to cut and style hair. There was no shortage of volunteer models as our learning hairdressers even

went to the girls' (juvenile) prison to practice and refine their skills. We hope that the second hairstyling course in early 2018 will be visited by volunteer hairstyling professionals from New Zealand.



Hairdressing at Prison



Make-Up Training

In the second half of the Beauty Course the students were busy learning make-up techniques. The girls enjoyed it very much. For our Christmas Party 2017 all girls at the Center lined up to get a festive make-up for the evening celebration.

After the 5 beauty students finished the 6-month course at the Center, the girls continue their practical training at local hairstylists. Ultimately, the Leadership and Vocational Training should generate its own revenue, and should become self-supporting over time. By extending the length of our training and including practical experience through internships, commissioned contracts, small scale creation of artisan products and of custom-made clothes the program will eventually generate its operating expenses and will become self-reliant.

### **3. HLA DAY – Craft and Design Shop**

To improve the income of our handicraft and sewing projects and to create longterm income generation possibilities for the graduates of the Leadership and Vocational Training Program People In Need supports HLA DAY shop in Yangon. See: [www.hladaymyanmar.org](http://www.hladaymyanmar.org)  
[www.facebook.com/hladaymyanmar/](https://www.facebook.com/hladaymyanmar/)





Hla Day Shop: Staff and Producers



Hla Day Shop: Products for Sale

Hla Day sells quality contemporary and traditional Burmese handicrafts produced by socially disadvantaged producers who struggle to overcome disabilities, discrimination, exclusion and poverty. The shop offers a sustainable market for local products and provides skill trainings and creative design to benefit the local artisans.

Hla Day is run as a not-for-profit organization and a social enterprise. Our 40 producer groups with about 280 members benefit directly from the income of Hla Day. Unfortunately, the Myanmar legal framework does not know a social enterprise or a not-for-profit company and Hla Day had to be incorporated as a limited company and has to pay profit taxes. The two shareholders of Hla Day have committed to distributing all shop income to the producers and to waive any payment of profits or dividends.

#### **4. New Projects for Women and Girls in Crises**

In our effort to help single mothers, and women and girls who are trafficked, abused and exploited, PIN started to support the “women’s and girls crisis program” in 2017. This program had been started by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Yangon. The project provides safe shelter and support programs, such as counselling, informal education and vocational training.

The program is housed in the former buildings of the Leadership Training Program and the old kindergarten at the Good Shepherd Sisters Convent in Yangon. The buildings had become available as the Vocational and Leadership Training Program had moved to the new Empowerment Center in Mandalay. Similarly, the kindergarten for socially disadvantaged children in Yangon closed. Over the last 10 years the availability of nursery and preschool places in the Yangon’s Downtown neighborhood has markedly increased. When we had started our kindergarten in 2006, it had been the only gratis kindergarten in our Downtown area.

PIN helps the Sisters to reconstruct and refurbish the old buildings; the former Leadership House became home for returning trafficked girls and women and the former kindergarten

serves as home for single mothers and their babies. During the first 6 months of the program 12 women and young girls sought the help of the Sisters and stay in the renovated shelters.



Refurbished Kindergarten



Guests

Starting 2018 we will extend our work with the Good Shepherd Sisters in Yangon. The Women in Crises Program will be run as two separate projects:

- 'Restoring the Dignity and Rights of Girls and Women Experiencing Gender Based Violence (GBV)' will be funded by People In Need and the Good Shepherd Myanmar Foundation, and
- 'Restoring the Dignity and Rights of Returned Migrants and Survivor of Human Trafficking Program (Anti-Human Trafficking)' will be funded by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), PIN and GSMF.

## 5. Don Bosco Youth Center (DBYC), Mandalay

PIN supports the Salesian Brothers – Don Bosco in Mandalay who look after the needs of vulnerable boys and street children. The Don Bosco Youth Center (DBYC) provides education and vocational training to enable the boys to earn their own living. The youth center accommodates 25 boys “at risk”.

The boys receive an informal school education, moral guidance and attend vocational training courses: electric and electronics, computer skills and languages, and motor bike repair. In addition, DBYC operates a drop-in-center and a night shelter for street children. The night shelter has a capacity of 50 children.





Vocational Training and Boarding House



Drop-in Center for Street Children

We supported the income generating activities of DBYC by providing bakery and ice-cream equipment. Now, the street children operate a coffee shop with fresh bread, rolls, and cakes and home-made ice-cream.



Coffee Shop



Boys Work in the Bakery

PIN helps DBYC to identify a potential donor for a new vocational training center. The current training center is too small. The DBYC can only run 3 months courses with 25 boys at risk. These courses are too short and do not help the general lack of vocational skills in Myanmar. Historically, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities are very scarce in Myanmar and in particular, in Mandalay.

According to the OECD in Myanmar just 0.5% of upper secondary students are enrolled in TVET at Government Technical High Schools compared to more than 40% in China and Indonesia and 35% in Thailand. Domestic and International companies in Myanmar identify the lack of skilled workers as a major hindrance for expanding their operations. The same applies for the youth: To find a secure job they need a longer and better vocational training.

## 6. Ye Lai Buddhist Monastery, Yangon

Since 2006 PIN has supported the Buddhist Ye Lai Monastery in North Okalappa Township of Yangon. The Monastery with about 50 Buddhist monks cares for patients living with HIV/AIDS.

In the aftermath of the 2008 Cyclone Nargis, PIN had joined the monks in emergency and rescue missions to the devastated Ayeyarwady Delta. After this successful cooperation, we donated two reinforced concrete, two-story buildings to the monastery which serve as a temporary shelter for persons affected with HIV/AIDS. The Monastery does not discriminate and accepts patients and accompanying relatives irrespective of gender, ethnicity and religion.



Ye Lai Monastery: Two Houses for HIV/AIDS Patients



Patients and Accompanying Persons

After the 2010 elections the generals transferred control of the Ministry of Health to the civil sector. In the following years the import of HIV medicines by NGOs and public hospitals improved significantly. Nowadays, medications against HIV/Aids and opportunistic infections are available in the larger cities in Myanmar. However, the health care sector outside of the major cities is still underfunded and underdeveloped. To get the proper medication and to avoid the social stigma within small village communities, persons affected with HIV travel to Yangon or other main cities. When patients visit Yangon hospitals and clinics for medical tests and to replenish their medicines they can stay free at the Ye Lai Monastery. The monks will take care of the food by sharing alms which they collect in the early mornings from devotees and neighbors.

If required, PIN will support the Monastery and assist with the major challenges. When the two (secular) houses were severely run down by the continuous stream of visiting HIV-patients, PIN refurbished and painted common rooms, toilets, washrooms and kitchen. In 2017 we continued the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the patients' houses. PIN built additional toilets and new washrooms and we raised the ground floor levels of kitchen and corridors to prevent flooding during the heavy monsoon season.



The Abbott Planning the Refurbishment



New Toilets

### **Note of Gratitude**

With the unceasing help of our friends and supporters and with lots of good fortune, People In Need continued its work in Myanmar in 2017. 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 generosity and contribution towards the foundation.

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