



Prospect Burma

Education for a Democratic Future

Prospect Burma welcomes hope for democratic change in Burma

Assuming that a successful transition of power to the NLD follows from its recent, emphatic victory at the ballot box, education reform will be high on the list of priorities for the newly elected government. For if the country is now truly on the path to democratic reform, a key limiting factor in its development will be the lack of skilled and educated people able to enact that change on the ground.

In a country where over 45% of the population is under 25 years of age, action to tackle the detrimental effects of the military junta's interference in higher education in particular is urgently needed.

University provision in the country is sparse and, after decades of neglect and under investment, the education offered by its few institutions falls significantly below

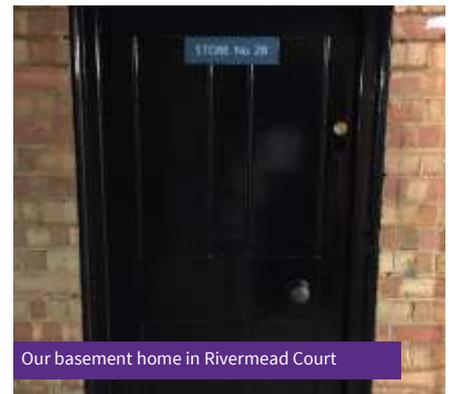


The opportunity to study overseas is vital

international standards. In addition, students were routinely persecuted by the former military regime and imprisoned for speaking out or attempting to set up student unions.

It will take many years to build an accessible and modern tertiary level education system in Burma that can satisfy the country's developing need for high quality education and training. In the meantime, the only option for training the next generation remains study abroad through schemes such as Prospect Burma's scholarship programme.

Prospect Burma on the Move



Our basement home in Rivermead Court

Since its inception in 1989, Prospect Burma has operated from Rivermead Court, a mansion block in Fulham. Our co-founders Lady Pat Gore-Booth and Evelyn Aris, both resided here and Evelyn's flat was the initial base of operations.

After a while, the organisation outgrew this first home and moved down to Store No. 28 in the basement of the building where we have remained ever since. In the new year, however, we will be taking up residence in new offices in Victoria which will allow us to expand further, accommodating more staff and volunteers than we can at present.

We will be sad to leave Rivermead Court – some of our most loyal supporters over the years have been other residents, but the move will provide many benefits including access to superfast broadband and valuable networking opportunities with other charities based in the same building.

From January, our new address will be Prospect Burma, Victoria Charity Centre, 11 Belgrave Road, London, SW1V 1RB.



Young people in Kayah State during the

2015: A Year of Hope?

The overwhelming victory of the National League for Democracy in the November general election has raised hopes that, finally, Burma could be on the road towards peace and democracy. Caution, however, remains deep among the country's citizens. During the past half century, there have been optimistic moments before when expectations were raised that the ruling generals would restore democratic rights to the people. Most memorably, the 1990 general election was also decisively won by the NLD. But on each occasion, the weeks turned into months as the military authorities prevented political transition from taking place through a combination of obfuscation, repression and delay.

Despite these worries, the sense is very much greater that, this time, a major change can be brought about in the landscape of national politics.

Burma is undoubtedly a more liberal and open place than it was when the quasi-civilian government of President Thein Sein assumed office four years ago. Nevertheless



Aung San Suu Kyi on the campaign trail

a formidable array of challenges still awaits Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD leaders as they seek to bring about democratic change.

a start has to be made on economic, health and educational reforms that bring genuine progress and benefit to all the country's peoples.

Among many outstanding needs, accommodation must be achieved with the national armed forces; the constitution has to be reformed which prevents Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming President; a nationwide ceasefire has to be agreed that includes all ethnic forces; and after decades of conflict and state failure, a start has to be made on economic, health and educational reforms that bring genuine progress and benefit to all the country's peoples.

In summary, in the coming months NLD leaders face the epoch-shaping task of a new beginning in political, ethnic and institutional reform to bring the country together after decades of military misrule. There can be no doubt that they enjoy popular support and good wishes around the world. But given Burma's troubled history, uncertain and difficult times still lie ahead.

Inaugural Gala Dinner Raises over £17,000

On 3rd November, over 90 guests attended Prospect Burma's inaugural gala fundraising dinner in London. It proved to be both an enjoyable and inspiring evening. We were delighted that a number of our scholars and alumni were present on the night to meet and talk to supporters.

After dinner, former BBC World Service correspondent, Chris Gunness, shared the fascinating and dramatic story of his role in reporting the 1988 uprising to the people of Burma and the rest of the world. Chris, who now works for the UN in the Middle East, concluded his speech by emphasising the transformative power of education

'in promoting human dignity, delivering security and prosperity for the next generation'.

The evening raised over £17,000



Back row, l to r: Dr Michael Marett-Crosby, Martin Smith, Sir Robin Christopher and Josh Bowsher. Front row, l to r: Niccy Lynch, Hannah Marcazzo, Steph O'Connell, Hnin Wint Naing, Yin Min Tun, Thant Sin Oo, Josh Htet, Simon Khin, Pwint Phyu Htun, Robert Gordon, Miriam Than and Min Min

income for our scholarship programme, and we are grateful to everyone who attended and supported the event. Our special thanks go to Chris Gunness, Allen & Overy for the wonderful venue, Brakspear and Tina Blick Catering for donating all the wine and to Rachel Ellison Ltd and Indus Experiences for their sponsorship. We are also grateful to the Angus McDonald Trust, The Real Greek, Dishoom and Café Spice Namaste

for their donation of raffle prizes.

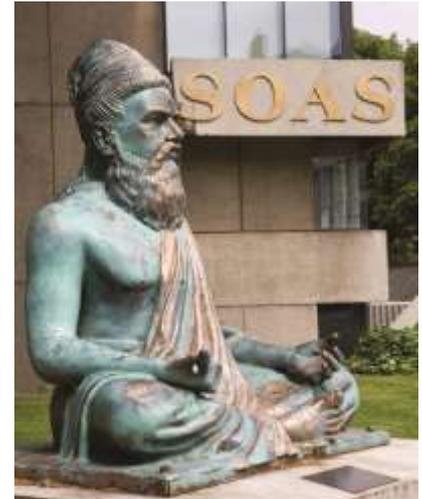
Thant Sin Oo is the first recipient of the Prospect Burma – Hla Pe Memorial Scholarship at SOAS. He is pursuing an MA in Media and Development.

I grew up in Mandalay in an ordinary family where my father worked as an engineer in a local company and I attended state school for my primary education. After completing my BA in International Communication Studies at the University of Nottingham in Malaysia, I went back to Myanmar to work with Save the Children, where I was involved in peace-building development projects in the remote Western region with Rakhine and Rohingya communities.

If people are able to watch Premier League in their village, why has no education channel been created that they can learn from and enjoy?

In this region, whether it is infrastructure limitation or lack of government support, youth are unable to continue their education after primary school. In one village in Rakhine state which I visited, I saw that one house had a satellite television. If people are able to watch Premier League in their village, why has no educational channel been created that they can learn from and also enjoy? Currently this kind of opportunity is not available to the children living there.

It was this question that motivated me to go back to study - I wanted to build my academic understanding of how the media in Myanmar interacts with the everyday life of its people. I believe, even at the micro level, in the current context of Myanmar, television has the potential to construct social cohesion. With broader information access and better representation, it can help the society break down social and cultural stereotypes and promote understanding.



Thant Sin Oo



Steph O'Connell, Prospect Burma Programme Advisor (centre) with PB scholar Hnin Wint Naing (left) and alumnus Bobo Lansin (right)



l to r: Chris Gunness, Martin Smith and Brenda Stanley

CLOUDS CD | now available

At our annual Savile Club concert in September, Josh Htet and Nathan Williamson once again provided a diverse evening's entertainment featuring pieces from the Western classical and Burmese folk music traditions. The evening celebrated the launch of *Clouds*, their EP featuring some of the beautiful Burmese folk songs they performed together.

1. True Lion doesn't eat grass
(*lay-tha-yar-zar-hman-yin-myet-ma-sar*)
Originally performed by *Sai Fung*

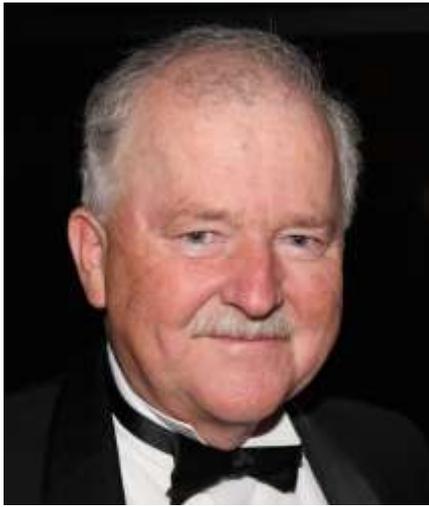
2. Clouds (*hain-hwar-moet-moet-twin*)
Originally performed by *Htin Oo*, composed by *Mphoo Nyein* and classical interpretation composed by *Hannah Farty*

3. Everywhere (*ngay-yar-tine-hmar*)
Originally performed by *Sai Htoo Satay* and composed by *Sai Khan Lek*

Vocals and Guitar - Josh Htet
Piano - Nathan Williamson



The CD is available to buy for £6 inc p&p from our website, prospectburma.org. It is also available as a download from cdbaby.com.



As I write, the wider implications of the National League for Democracy's overwhelming triumph in the 8 November polls are starting to sink in. I have recently been in Burma since the election where I found the initial euphoria giving way to a realisation of the enormity of the challenges ahead. However events unfold, one thing is clear: the NLD will be coming to power on the back of massive popular expectations which any party would struggle to meet.

Not the least of the new government's priorities will be to draw up and implement a fundamental reform of the

country's education system.

The Thein Sein government's attempts to begin this process have been both patchy and highly controversial. Even assuming the right policies are introduced, it will be many years before the legacy of the last half-century of repression and underinvestment will be overcome.

Meanwhile, we owe it to the young generation of Burma to offer them a helping hand to get the education they deserve. That is why Prospect Burma wants to redouble its efforts and reach out to as many scholarship applicants as we can.

In that spirit, we were delighted that our first ever Gala Dinner held in Allen & Overy's spectacular dining room in the City on 3 November raised over £17,000 for our scholarship programme. A big thank you to everyone who helped make this event such a success.

To all our loyal supporters we send our thanks for your continued generosity.

With very best wishes for the festive season.

Robert Gordon
Chairman

Our work is only made possible by the commitment of you, our supporters. There are many ways you can help us.

Share your Expertise

In order to develop our infrastructure and working practices, from time-to-time Prospect Burma needs assistance from individuals and organisations willing to make their skills, knowledge and expertise accessible to us. Over the past few months, we have been working with Appssential to develop a new data management system which will not only save us time and money but also ensure we can provide a better service to our supporters and improve monitoring and evaluation of our work. Founded by PB alumnus, Tin Aung, Appssential specialises in developing bespoke solutions for organisations using the cloud-based Salesforce CRM platform. We'd like to send our thanks to Tin and all his colleagues at Appssential for their hard work and patience and for the important contribution they have made to the future success of Prospect Burma.

Save the Date

Our next event will take place on **Monday 25th April at the Savile Club**. The speaker will be Dr Richard Cockett, author of *Blood, Dreams and Gold: The*



Changing Face of Burma. Currently Britain Business Editor at *The Economist*, Richard was formerly their SE Asia Correspondent. Tickets will be available direct from the Savile Club. For further details, please contact maja@savileclub.co.uk

Donate

Prospect Burma invests in the future of Burma through its young people.

Our scholarship programme is open to young men and women from all regions of the country and from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. It allows them access to quality higher education and training at overseas universities which will not be available in Burma for many years to come.

You can donate to our scholarship programme:

- > **Online:** by visiting justgiving.com/prospectburma

- > **Direct:** send your payment to Prospect Burma's bank account number 10019933, sort code 16-17-25

- > **Post:** cheque made payable to Prospect Burma at the Victoria Charity Centre, 11 Belgrave Road, London, SW1V 1RB.

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Prospect Burma

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