Scholarship Application Season Has Returned!

Scholarship Awards Overview

The 2015 scholarship competition was announced shortly before Christmas, with a deadline of early April 2015. We look forward to supporting a brand new cohort of Burmese students achieve their ambitions and contribute to building a democratic Burma.

As we receive applications from many hopeful candidates, we wanted to share what your support enabled us to accomplish with the 2014 cohort. Our scholarship programme supported 96 students in their university degrees, studying a diverse range of subjects from Counselling and Education to Politics, Law and International Relations. Students attended universities in 10 countries across the world including Thailand, India, Hong Kong, and the United States.

This year’s scholarship competition will see new challenges in the face of changes in Burma’s educational landscape. In spite of this, the number of organisations supporting Burmese students through overseas scholarships is diminishing. With an expected increase in demand for scholarships, Prospect Burma is aiming to grow to meet Burma’s educational needs. This year we want to award more scholarships, support more students, and continue to be at the forefront of educating Burmese students so they can make a meaningful contribution to the democratic transformation of Burma. With your support we can achieve this goal!

Chairman's Editorial

As we stand on the threshold of what could be a decisive year in Burma’s history, your Trustees have just completed a triennial reassessment and strategic review of Prospect Burma’s work. We have now mapped a way forward, building on Prospect Burma’s long track record while taking account of the changing environment within Burma and the multiplicity of international actors now engaged in helping Burma further its transition towards a pluralist democracy, a vibrant civil society and a functioning market economy.

As well as refreshing and updating our core vision, mission and values, we have determined to continue our work in educating young Burmese abroad. Feedback received from a wide range of contacts has shown that our scholarship programme remains highly prized. It will be some time before Burma’s own institutions can deliver higher education and training of the right standard. Since many other donors have now discontinued their scholarship programmes, Prospect Burma remains one of the very few such providers. At the same time, we shall be working with the growing number of returned alumni, as well as other stakeholders, to explore other possible education-related initiatives within Burma itself.

Finally, I would like to thank you for the great response to our bumper 25th anniversary summer Newsletter. It was encouraging to receive so many positive reactions to the life-stories of those of our alumni featured in that edition. A number of our supporters felt moved by these stories to donate some much-needed funds. I warmly thank them for their generosity and encourage as many of you as possible to share your fundraising ideas and experiences with the team here at Prospect Burma.

Robert Gordon, Prospect Burma Chairman
Cycling in Burma

The journey of Nigel Melville and his fellow adventurers

Nigel Melville and his wife Maria first visited Burma in 1986 with Caroline Courtauld, one of Prospect Burman’s Trustees. The opportunity to return presented itself in January 2014 through what Nigel described as “a cycling trip organised by Grasshopper Adventurer; an efficient, knowledgeable and enthusiastic team of young Burmese.” They travelled with a group of friends with whom they make annual overseas cycling trips. This team of adventurers, who have an average age of about 70, followed two separate routes; first from Rangoon to the South and second in a circle in Central Burma.

The trip started on a train from Rangoon to Kyaikhtiyo, then cycling to Thaton, Hpa-an, Moulmein, Bilugyun Island and Thanbyuzayat, the terminus of the “Death Railway”. Then they flew to Inle Lake; they cycled along the lake, then to Pindaya and on towards Mandalay. Next was a drive from Mandalay to Maymyo. They cycled there before taking the train to Gokteik, then drove back to Mandalay. The final cycling route was from Mandalay to Ava, Monywa, Pakkoku and Pagan. The group cycled just over 500 miles!

Nigel and his family have supported Prospect Burma for over 20 years. Last September, Nigel organised a talk on his trip for 85 interested friends, and used the opportunity to raise money for Prospect Burma at the same time - a total of £1,350 was raised from the evening! Nigel feels that Prospect Burma’s work continues to be important and was pleased to introduce the charity to a group of people who are interested in Burma.

Our passions can not only inspire but with a little creativity may also contribute to improving the lives of others less fortunate than ourselves. Sincere thanks to ALL of you who raise funds for, and donate so generously to, Prospect Burma.

Savile Club Concert

We were delighted that our concert at the Savile club last Autumn raised an impressive £815 for Prospect Burma. Many thanks to all of you who attended; it was a wonderful evening.

The concert featured a classical recital by renowned pianist Nathan Williamson. Nathan was joined by our newest trustee and PB alumnus Josh Htet, who sang his own adaptations of Burmese folk songs. The most memorable moment of the evening came when Josh and Nathan joined together in a beautiful collaboration where east met west.

We are very happy to announce that both Nathan and Josh will be back for this year’s concert on Wednesday 30th September 2015. We will let you know as soon as more information is available, and we hope to see you all there!

Celebrating our Long Term Supporters

Martin Pick has had a long connection with Prospect Burma, being a friend of Aung San Suu Kyi and the Gore-Booth family since the 1960s. Martin has been a regular donor and has organised classical concerts at the Savile Club to raise funds for Prospect Burma for the last several years.

A visit to Burma last year showed Martin the education challenges faced by the country and how vital the work of Prospect Burma is. Martin says “On my visit to Burma I realised the huge need for higher education. Prospect Burma scholarships are hugely important in a country where there has been so little opportunity for bright students to become fully qualified professionals. It is a much more acute problem than in many other countries because there has been so little investment in the infrastructure.”

Martin continues to find new ways to support us. Last year he used his 70th birthday as an opportunity to fundraise for Prospect Burma. His efforts generated £750 - well done, and happy birthday, Martin!

If you have an event coming up, why not use it to raise funds for Prospect Burma? Whether it’s a birthday party, your local amateur dramatics society show, or your community’s Summer Fair, events provide great opportunities to support our cause. Every little you raise for us will contribute to our work supporting Burmese students to achieve their ambitions and rebuild their country.
A Critical Year in Burma

2015 is likely to mark another tense but uncertain year in Burmese politics. There can be no doubt that there have been significant changes in the socio-political environment since the quasi-civilian government of President Thein Sein assumed office in 2011. Many political prisoners have been released, peace talks begun with ethnic opposition forces, and dialogue and further reform promised to the opposition National League for Democracy.

Such compromise has been welcomed by the international community. After decades of military isolationism, foreign investors and tourists continue to flock in, Western sanctions are being lifted, and prominent international figures have become regular visitors, most recently President Barack Obama at the ASEAN-USA summit in Nay Pyi Taw.

In Burma itself, however, disquiet is growing. As the countdown begins to a crucial general election later this year, many citizens complain that they are yet to see any real improvements in their lives. As Aung San Suu Kyi recently warned, the reform process has stalled. The same military-business elite is in power; constitutional reform is blocked; land-grabbing is increasing; ethnic and communal conflict is continuing; and military leaders lately appear to be returning to their old hard-line ways.

Nevertheless the genie of change is out of the bottle. Community and political groups are now active across the country, advocating progress on issues from land rights and justice to education and welfare reform. Attention is increasingly focused on the forthcoming election. An unpredictable time is expected. But if the military old-guard does try to obstruct political progress, there can be no doubt that the popular endeavour for peace and democracy will only intensify and continue.

Hannah Marcazzo, Prospect Burma Executive Director

We are delighted to welcome Hannah Marcazzo as Prospect Burma’s new Executive Director. Hannah originally trained as a microbiologist and spent 7 years working as a consultant to the healthcare industry in the UK and US.

In 2008 Hannah chose to focus her career efforts in the area of international development and, prior to joining Prospect Burma in October 2014, she ran The Kindu Trust, a charity focussed on poverty reduction in Ethiopia.

On joining Prospect Burma, Hannah says, “I am excited to join the PB Team and look forward to meeting more of you in the coming months!”

Joshua Htet, Prospect Burma Trustee

In October 2014, Joshua Htet joined the Prospect Burma Board of Trustees. Joshua is no stranger to the pages of our newsletter. He was one of the alumni featured in the Silver Jubilee edition last summer.

In that issue he expressed how being a PB grantee had changed his life in several ways. Not only did it afford him the opportunity to attain a law degree from Oxford University which led to his current position with a top law firm, he also met his wife, a fellow PB alumnus.

Save the Date

2015 sees a return of the biennial Prospect Burma Summer Event! This is a very special year, as Aung San Suu Kyi celebrates her 70th birthday, and we are timing our event in June to coincide with this. We will update you with more details closer to the date. In the meantime we welcome contributions for our auction and raffle prizes - please contact Audrey at information@prospectburma.org if you are able to donate. Thank you!
Founded in 1989, Prospect Burma invests in a positive future for Burma through its young people. We give underprivileged Burmese students, from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, access to higher education through our scholarship programme. Our main objective is to build a core group of skilled Burmese people who have studied subjects vital to the rebuilding of civil society in Burma. It is a condition of the grant that students commit to return home to participate in development and nation building.

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Support the London Office
As we look to increase the number of scholarships we award, the team in London is growing to keep pace. Do you have a laptop computer that you no longer need? Please consider donating it to Prospect Burma, where it will be put to good use!

Help us Cut Costs
In order to maximise the money we spend on scholarships, we are looking to cut down the amount of money we spend on costs such as printing and postage. If you would prefer to have your newsletter sent via email please let us know. By switching to an electronic copy you will help Prospect Burma as well as our environment.

Send a Donation
Please send donations, payable to Prospect Burma, to the address below. If you are a UK taxpayer, signing a Gift Aid form with your donation, increases the value of your gift by 25% at no extra cost to you. Your donation will be used to help us provide scholarships to Burmese students.

Student Spotlight
Prospect Burma scholarships allow Burmese students to pursue ambitious projects which support their country. In this newsletter we look at Mai Nway Nway, a PB Alumnus, who gained an MA in Educational Administration at Assumption University, Thailand.

Thanks to your support we could give Mai Nway Nway a scholarship for her studies and enable her to pursue her goal of setting up a language centre in Burma. Now she has graduated Mai Nway Nway has set about accomplishing this goal:

“I am preparing to write a project proposal for rural education and development in my native village. I am gathering some information to complete a successful project proposal. The project will mainly focus on teaching English to primary school and middle school children.”

For Mai Nway Nway a Prospect Burma scholarship wasn’t just an opportunity to study, but an opportunity to study abroad. As the Institute of International Education recognised in a 2013 report, university education inside Burma is in need of ‘nothing less than a complete renovation.’ To gain the skills and knowledge that can affect change in their country, Burmese students often need to study abroad.

Mai Nway Nway tells us that studying in Thailand meant a “meaningful student life during my study… Students are free to choose their favorite subjects in university and schools are also empowered for the school administration and leadership development.”

GET INVOLVED...

...Adopt a Scholar!
With the 2015 scholarship awards quickly approaching we know that we can only help students like Mai Nway Nway with your support. If you are thinking about giving to Prospect Burma, why not join our Adopt-a-Scholarship scheme?

With our Adopt-a-Scholarship scheme, benefactors can support a Burmese student for the academic year. It’s also an opportunity to contribute to the democratic development of Burma in a field that matters to you – we aim to match you to a scholar studying a subject you are passionate about.

It costs an average of £4,000 per academic year to cover the cost of course fees, books, accommodation, and equipment needed to send a Burmese student to university. By making an annual donation to cover the cost of a full scholarship, at £4,000, or a partial scholarship, at £800, you will be making a huge impact in the life of a Burmese student. Every Adopter will receive information about the scholar they support, and a yearly update on their progress.

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