Prospect Burma has supported students from Myanmar for almost 30 years, and over that time we have seen the country undergo enormous changes. We don’t know what the future holds for the country, but whatever happens Prospect Burma will strive to be there, continuing our work of educating and empowering young Burmese people.

Prospect Burma has always been, and remains, a non-political organisation. With reports of violence across the country making headlines we feel the responsibility of our work more than ever. In this edition of our newsletter we focus on peace, our critical place in the future of Myanmar and the importance of educating the next generation.

The peace campaign - Why we believe education is essential for a peaceful future.

PB in Myanmar - Our first six months in country have brought challenges and successes.

PB student Khin Khin Lwin - How our work contributes to peace, through the work of our scholarship recipients.
Myanmar is a land of astonishing ethnic and cultural diversity. This makes it a uniquely rewarding country to visit but it also presents unusually complex institutional and social challenges. As a result, many parts of the country have experienced armed conflict for many of the 70 years since independence. Sadly, this remains the case even today. There has been serious unrest, violence and conflict in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin States as well as elsewhere. For Prospect Burma, as Myanmar, now is a vital time to act in order to create a stable future for the country and its people. 2016 was a year of progress and change for Prospect Burma. We said goodbye to our founding patron Viscount Slim while welcoming HRH The Prince of Wales as our new patron; we opened our first-ever office in Yangon and continue to seek out talented individuals to train in the most urgently needed skills, such as conflict and peace. Given the scale and complexity of the challenges facing Myanmar, it is a requirement that will be with us for some time to come.

Robert Gordon - Chairman of the Board of Trustees

An update from Burma

A thousand miles of my journey have just started when the time for monsoon comes. Clouds move in the sky, the rain starts, and the heat lessens. The first step of my journey with Prospect Burma has begun. It is 14 July 2016 and I’m setting up an office with excitement that cannot be forgotten. It will be a thousand nights of stories.

I’m very much impressed by the PB alumni once I start to get the opportunity to meet with them. I am inspired by them, and by seeing what they are contributing back for Myanmar’s development. Some of them work in research institutes and development fields while others have started their own organizations, and lead their own businesses. I also have the chance to speak with potential students who would like to study abroad with a PB scholarship. They are confident, energetic and eager to explore new things. I can see their hopes in their eyes, willing to shape their future.

I have already decided the next 6 months are going to be ridiculously amazing. I am enjoying working at Prospect Burma after my own experience of studying in Japan as an international scholarship recipient. I am now contributing back to my country and want to share the importance of bringing skills and experiences back, to my fellow scholars.

Hnin Nwe Nwe Aung - Country Manager, Yangon

Campaigning for Peace

In December 2016 Prospect Burma ran our first dedicated online fundraising campaign, with the aim of raising £5,000 to provide a scholarship to specifically further peace.

We believe that the best way to build a better future for the country is to equip the young people of Myanmar with skills, experience and knowledge, and understanding conflict resolution, and achieving peace in the country is central to this. The campaign, which took place across social media and on our website, received a fantastic reception. Thank you to all who responded and supported us.

Our next round of scholarship applications is now open, and we look forward to updating you on the recipient of the Peace Campaign funding in a future edition of the newsletter. This will not be the first scholarship of this kind that we have provided however. Overleaf you can read about a Prospect Burma alumna, Khin Khin Lwin, who has dedicated her studies to learning about the place of conflict resolution in the future of Myanmar.

“Myanmar needs dedicated experts and educated young people like Khin Khin to break free from the cycles of violence and conflict that have disfigured this beautiful but troubled land.”

An update from Burma

A thousand miles of my journey have just started when the time for monsoon comes. Clouds move in the sky, the rain starts, and the heat lessens. The first step of my journey with Prospect Burma has begun. It is 14 July 2016 and I’m setting up an office with excitement that cannot be forgotten. It will be a thousand nights of stories.

I’m very much impressed by the PB alumni once I start to get the opportunity to meet with them. I am inspired by them, and by seeing what they are contributing back for Myanmar’s development. Some of them work in research institutes and development fields while others have started their own organizations, and lead their own businesses. I also have the chance to speak with potential students who would like to study abroad with a PB scholarship. They are confident, energetic and eager to explore new things. I can see their hopes in their eyes, willing to shape their future.

I have already decided the next 6 months are going to be ridiculously amazing. I am enjoying working at Prospect Burma after my own experience of studying in Japan as an international scholarship recipient. I am now contributing back to my country and want to share the importance of bringing skills and experiences back, to my fellow scholars.

Hnin Nwe Nwe Aung - Country Manager, Yangon

Campaigning for Peace

In December 2016 Prospect Burma ran our first dedicated online fundraising campaign, with the aim of raising £5,000 to provide a scholarship to specifically further peace.

We believe that the best way to build a better future for the country is to equip the young people of Myanmar with skills, experience and knowledge, and understanding conflict resolution, and achieving peace in the country is central to this. The campaign, which took place across social media and on our website, received a fantastic reception. Thank you to all who responded and supported us.

Our next round of scholarship applications is now open, and we look forward to updating you on the recipient of the Peace Campaign funding in a future edition of the newsletter. This will not be the first scholarship of this kind that we have provided however. Overleaf you can read about a Prospect Burma alumna, Khin Khin Lwin, who has dedicated her studies to learning about the place of conflict resolution in the future of Myanmar.
Sai Min Zaw is a PB alumnus from the quiet market township of Kyaukme in Shan State. Today, he works to implement peace in Myanmar.

Prospect Burma supported Sai Min Zaw’s degree in Mass Communication Technology at Ramkhamhaeng University in Thailand, with a PB scholarship. Since his graduation in 2015 he has put his skills and expertise to use as a team leader in the Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAO). The EAO provides a platform for peace talks between Myanmar’s government and the armed groups of various ethnic regions, working together to facilitate peace by strengthening relationships and opening up lines of communication. Sai Min Zaw runs the logistics side of the office and also provides knowledge dissemination and communications support to the EAO team. The committee has worked towards a stable future through the implementation of political dialogues and treaties such as the National Ceasefire Agreement. Those groups involved share the common goal of establishing a democratic federal union. Organisations and individuals which promote open discussion and mutual understanding are important tools for building a more peaceful future for the country.

Education for the future

Prospect Burma scholarship recipient Khin Khin is currently undertaking a Master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand. She told us:

“I am keen to further develop my capacity in peace building and conflict transformation to examine, explore, and respond to in-depth the many complexities and challenging issues that my people and I face in our country, which is intrinsically linked to and affected by issues unfolding at a regional and global level.”

In October 2016 Khin Khin began her studies at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, and plans to begin her research on “Multiple identities and peace building agency in Myanmar: women’s room to manoeuvre as peace builders in the face of challenges” towards the end of 2017.

The impact of a Prospect Burma scholarship starts with our students and has far-reaching consequences, not just throughout the country but globally. Equipped with vital skills and expertise, our alumni go on to achieve incredible things, and to facilitate the transformation of Burma through the application of their skills in the country.

80% of our 2015 graduates have already returned to Burma

64% of our 2015 graduates have found employment in fields including education, health and journalism

The average annual scholarship award is £4,000 per student

* based on 2016 award figures

* Percentage as of 6 months post-graduation
A Difficult Time in Transition

As 2017 begins, hopes that the transition to peace and democracy in Burma will be quick or easy are being severely tested. After half a century of military rule, few citizens expected that political progress would be smooth. But the scale of new challenges within a year of the National League for Democracy assuming office has ensured that any honeymoon period has been short. Initially, all had appeared to be going well. This was highlighted at the “21st Panglong Peace Conference” in late August, when over 1,000 attendees from across the country met together to discuss nationwide peace and federal reform. Subsequently, however, a number of regressive trends have emerged to overshadow initiatives for national reconciliation.

Following fatal attacks on the police by a militant Islamist group in the Rakhine state, the national armed forces (Tatmadaw) launched an intensive security operation affecting the local Muslim population, many of whom self-identify as “Rohingya”. More than 1,500 homes were reportedly destroyed, at least 30,000 inhabitants fled their homes, and over 80 people died, prompting an international outcry. At the same time, despite the success of the Panglong meeting, the Tatmadaw intensified military operations against ethnic armed organisations in the Kachin and northern Shan states, which launched counter-attacks in return. Another 20,000 local inhabitants were internally displaced, as the Tatmadaw brought in attack aircraft in the heaviest use of aerial power in Burma’s modern history. Presently, there are around 500,000 displaced persons in the different ethnic borderlands.

Finally, in urban areas, too, there have been concerns about the country’s democratic fragility as growing numbers of charges are brought under Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law. With the NLD’s advent to office, many citizens thought that this controversial law would be consigned to history. But its use is currently on the rise, and in January the Tatmadaw reportedly sued nine students for “defamation” in a pro-peace play they staged in Pathein.

Hopes of peace and reform, however, are not lost. Both in Burma and abroad, the widespread perception is that most recent setbacks are due to Tatmadaw hardliners using their powers under the 2008 constitution to re-assert their dominant position. This criticism was expressed on a January visit by the UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee using their powers under the 2008 constitution to re-assert their dominant position. This criticism was expressed on a January visit by the UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee who singled out “three legs of the government” (i.e. the Tatmadaw-controlled ministries of home, defence and border affairs) that are creating an uphill battle for human rights while the NLD is still new in government.

The stage is delicately set. Liberal change has undoubtedly come to many aspects of national life during the past few years. International aid has continued to grow and, despite the current setbacks, many initiatives are underway in the fields of education, health and economic reform. In 2017, the NLD is promising to get its reform programme off the ground. Presently, there are many hopeful signs that political progress will continue.

Please find enclosed a cheque for: £ __________________________. I want to gift aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to Prospect Burma. You can also donate online at prospectburma.org/donate. Signed: __________________________

Make a donation to Prospect Burma today and help us work for a better future for Myanmar. You can also donate online at prospectburma.org/donate.

Our printed newsletter

Thank you for your support.