Welcome to the Prospect Burma newsletter. We have loads to share with you this edition, from an exciting announcement about our new Patron below, to updates from fundraisers, the new scholarships announcement and updates from our alumni. I hope you enjoy reading it! - Hannah Marcazzo, Executive Director

Introducing Prospect Burma’s new Patron

In February this year our founding Patron Viscount Slim stepped down from the position that he has held with us for 27 years. While we are sad to see him go, we are incredibly grateful for his support and guidance over his time as our Patron.

We are delighted to announce that in June HRH The Prince of Wales kindly agreed to become our new Patron.

His Royal Highness has helped us over many years with supportive messages and has personally met some of our scholars and alumni. Prospect Burma is honoured that this relationship will now become even stronger in the years ahead.

Spotlight on: Viscount Slim

Viscount Slim was educated at Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College in Dehra Dun in India. In 1944, he joined the British Indian Army 6th Gurkha Rifles and was transferred to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in 1948. He entered the Special Air Service in 1952. From 1961, he was instructor at the Staff College, Camberley, and from 1964 at the Joint Services Staff College. In 1972, he retired from the armed forces at the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel with a later honorary promotion to Colonel. He was appointed OBE the following year. Viscount Slim was Patron of Prospect Burma from our beginnings in 1989 up until early this year. We are immensely grateful to him for all of his guidance and encouragement over this time, and know that he will remain interested in and supportive of our organisation.
Prospect Burma in Burma

The summer of 2016 is an exciting time for Prospect Burma, as we are opening our first office in Rangoon. Long term supporters of PB and of Burma will know what an incredible achievement this is, and that as little as 6 years ago this would have felt like an impossibility. We have recruited a Country Manager, Hnin Nwe Nwe Aung (pictured) who will take the lead on setting up the office, with support from the UK. The new office will allow us to offer support and expertise on the ground like never before. In particular it will allow us to reach students in rural areas and a greater diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, as we see more and more of our alumni returning to the country we will be able to help them to develop their networks and support them in seeking internships and jobs. Our main focus will be to ensure all Burmese people have the opportunity to access higher education, regardless of location or circumstance.

The new Country Manager, Hnin Nwe Nwe Aung, was previously working as Communications Coordinator for the Centre for Economic and Social Development where she was involved in planning and implementing internal and external communications strategies. Hnin holds a Masters Degree in International Peace Studies from the International University of Japan, and another in International Relations from the University of Rangoon. We are delighted to have Hnin on board. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our long term administrative partner Thabyay who have supported us with our scholarships programme for many years.

Prospect Burma launches a new website

In May we were delighted to launch our brand new website. The design was created by our volunteer Graphic Designer Ana Godoy, and programmed by web design agency Appssential. Appssential was founded by Prospect Burma alumnus Tin Aung and we are delighted to have the skills of one of our alumni demonstrated so beautifully to our site visitors!

I’m sure you’ll agree the finished website looks great - take a look for yourself at www.prospectburma.org. Over the coming months we will be adding more pages and information onto the website, including a blog and an up to date news page.

What do you think? We would love your feedback, email your thoughts to us at communications@prospectburma.org.
On 14 June Petyt Hall in Chelsea was transformed into an English country garden for our 2016 Summer Party. Over 100 Prospect Burma supporters attended the event. They were greeted with a glass of bubbly, and welcomed by our Guest of Honour for the evening Prunella Scales CBE. One party-goer told us “It was a great opportunity to meet other Prospect Burma supporters and find out what the organisation is up to.”

The evening was held in celebration of Aung San Suu Kyi’s 71st Birthday, and we were delighted to receive a special message from Daw Suu to share with our guests. PB Chairman Robert Gordon read out the message, as well as a personal message from our new Patron HRH The Prince of Wales to our guests. You can read both of these on our website.

Guests were invited to take in the beautiful surroundings and to enjoy some delicious canapés, created by caterer to Royalty Tina Blick. Drinks were kindly donated by Neal Chapman.

There was plenty to enjoy at the party, including a gift tree and raffle, and a guess the weight of the cake stall. Thanks to the support of many generous donors, the ever popular auction contained some wonderful prizes.

It was presided over by TV’s Jon Glover, and featured incredible items including a trip for two to Burma, a stay in a fabulous château in France kindly donated by Caroline Courtauld, and the chance to have a character in a book named after the winning bidder, donated by crime author Kate Charles. In total the event raised over £17,500 for our scholarship programme, and will help us to support another generation of Burmese scholars to reach their academic goals.

PB Summer Party raises over £17,500

Thank you to all our supporters who joined in our Summer Party at Petyt Hall, Chelsea on 14 June. Your generosity helped us raise more than £17,000 towards our scholarship fund, a wonderful achievement.

It was a joyous occasion for other reasons too. We were cheered by warm messages of support from both HRH The Prince of Wales and our long-time ally and mentor Aung San Suu Kyi. We are honoured that His Royal Highness has agreed to become our new patron, succeeding our founder-patron Viscount John Slim whose wisdom and judgment have been so valuable to us over this past quarter of a century.

A new chapter is now opening for Prospect Burma. After being a purely UK-based charity since its inception, Prospect Burma judge the time is now right to open an office in Rangoon. An enthusiastic local director has now started work, as you can see by our article on the left. I would particularly encourage returning alumni to make contact with her. Having a presence on the ground in Burma will help us target our educational support more effectively. We want to encourage young people from remote and disadvantaged regions of the country to apply for our scholarships. We are looking at ways in which we could help students from these remoter areas bring their English up to the level needed to apply for one of our scholarships. Our new office in Rangoon will also make it easier to keep in touch with our alumni and track the areas in which they are beginning to make an impact.

Robert Gordon, Chairman
Swe Zaw Oo’s story

Swe Zaw Oo is originally from Kyaukme in Northern Shan State, but for the last 4 years has experienced a very different way of life whilst studying at Green Mountain College in the USA. Based in Vermont, Green Mountain College is a liberal arts college with a focus on building economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Swe Zaw Oo completed a Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Environmental studies this June and we are delighted to report she has already returned to Burma to put these newly earned skills to good use. Growing up in an area of Burma with a burgeoning factory industry, Swe Zaw Oo has experienced at first hand the environmental impact of industry upon the environment. As she wrote in her original application form to us:

“As a high school graduate I did not fully comprehend the business mechanism behind the development of industrial zones that were the cause of environmental degradation. I’ve been pessimistic about the self-destructive business strategies in Myanmar since then.”

Instead of becoming downhearted about the environmental damage she was witnessing around her, Swe Zaw Oo saw an opportunity to take positive steps in championing a better way of working for the future of Burma.

Over her 4 years at Green Mountain College Swe Zaw Oo has worked incredibly hard, and she graduated this year with flying colours. She was awarded the “excellence for mathematics” award as well as being made Valedictorian with the highest grade point average in her year. She plans now to put these impressive skills to good use in her home country.

Swe Zaw Oo said: “My future plan to bring sustainability to practices to the economics, businesses and environmental sectors of Myanmar, hasn’t changed…I’ve decided to start employment in Myanmar in order to apply my knowledge to help build the country through works from private sector, and learn about areas of development in Myanmar through hands-on experiences for a minimum of two years, before getting the post-graduate degree.”

Swe Zaw Oo has started working at the General Electric company in Myanmar as a Global Commercial Leadership Program Management Trainee. The two-year trainee programme will help her to learn about renewable energy and development practices. She would like to return to University after this to complete a Master of Science in Sustainable Development, and then return once again to Myanmar to devote her time to developing sustainable business practices in industries there.
An update about our Scholarships

Over the past few months we received over 300 applications for this year’s scholarship competition which closed in early April. We have awarded 93 students a grant for the 2016-17 academic year; 49 continuing students and 44 new students. The recipients are undertaking studies in 10 fields including education, law and medical science. They have all expressed their passion for helping to build the future of Burma, and of taking the skills that they gain back to the country. We were delighted to receive so many high quality applications. Of the 18 students who graduated in 2016 so far, 66% of them have already returned to the country and 50% have already found employment.

With the new Burmese government in place the potential to dramatically alter the future of the country is greater than ever. It is vital that Prospect Burma continues to help young Burmese people to develop skills and knowledge to take back and support the development of the country.

A Time of Opportunity and Caution

With the advent to government of the National League for Democracy in March, hopes are rising that the country could be entering the most progressive period in national politics in many decades. Given the scale of repression in the past, it is important to acknowledge how far the socio-political landscape has changed during the past five years so that a better future could finally be in view. Certainly, the NLD enjoys enormous good-will, both in Burma and abroad, as the party embarks on the essential tasks of achieving national peace and reform.

The road ahead, however, will not be easy. A legacy of grave challenges remains to be addressed after half a century of military rule. The national armed forces, known as the Tatmadaw, still control three ministries and a quarter of seats in the legislatures; armed conflict continues in several ethnic borderlands; and land-grabbing and natural resource exploitation are still prevalent in an economy dominated by powerful interests and a crony elite. Despite its abundant potential, Burma is ranked at a poor 148th of 188 countries on the UNDP’s Human Development Index and 147th of 168 countries on the Corruption Index of Transparency International.

Faced with these daunting realities, the NLD has made a cautious start. During the first 100 days in office, Aung San Suu Kyi and the party leaders have concentrated on three priorities: establishing the NLD in government; improving relations with the Tatmadaw generals; and announcing a “Panglong for the 21st Century Conference” to promote nationwide peace in the country.

A lack of political definition in these moves has caused concern among some supporters that the NLD may be compromising on more radical reforms. An escalation of fighting in the Kachin and Shan states, as well as continued Buddhist-Muslim tensions, have also raised questions about how the NLD intends to resolve such corrosive divisions in politics and society. But NLD officials assert that it has first been essential to consolidate a stable transition in national government before moving on to more detailed plans.

The stage is now delicately set. During the five-year life of the new parliament, the NLD has an ambitious list of goals. These include constitutional amendments, peace-building, refugee resettlement and essential reforms in the long-neglected fields of education, health, economics and the environment. New crisis points may well occur. But, for the moment, the political focus is on the positive, and citizens across the country are trusting that finally a democratic future is in prospect after so many detrimental years of impasse and malaise. Martin Smith
Prospect Burma fundraisers take on the elements

Prospect Burma is grateful for having supporters who are ready to take on any challenge to help us. This summer in particular our supporters have been getting active and creative in their attempts to raise funds, and we are delighted to share their stories with you over the next couple of pages.

Kate Ainslie walks Leeds to Liverpool

Kate Ainslee spent time over Christmas in Burma and having seen the limited educational opportunities for many of the young Burmese, wanted to contribute towards a Prospect Burma scholarship. She made the decision to walk an amazing 124 miles over 7 days from Liverpool to Leeds along the canal, built at the end of the 18th century to link the two cities. Her walk took in some of the beautiful Georgian architecture of Liverpool, and she met some interesting and friendly people along the way. You can read Kate’s blog in full at prospectburma.org/the-blog/

Kate told us: “My walk was fantastic! I loved Liverpool and then the walk was through some of the most interesting and beautiful countryside I have ever walked through...The body and feet stood up pretty well. I think I’ve finally cracked the pre-walk prep and how to deal with blisters.”

Kate’s walk raised over £700 for Prospect Burma, huge thanks and congratulations go to Kate for this fantastic achievement. You can read more about Kate’s walks at www.kateswalks.com.

PB Director takes to the mud!

As if the Color Run isn’t enough, our Executive Director Hannah is taking on the gruelling challenge of the popular Tough Mudder assault course on the 20 August, to raise funds for PB. The Tough Mudder is a 12 mile run interspersed with obstacles such as an ice plunge and daring high-jumps into mud, like the one on the right! If you would like to support Hannah you can do so by visiting www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hannah-marcazzo.
Members of the Prospect Burma office donned their running shoes and took to the streets of Wembley this June for the Color Run. Team members Josh Bowsher, Kirsty Mitchell and Hannah Marcazzo took part in “the happiest 5k in the world” and raised over £450 for Prospect Burma. The run features colour stations, where runners are pelted with multi-coloured paint throughout the run. Thank you to everyone who sponsored us.

PB’s Technicolour Dream Team!

Would you like to get involved?

We have some great events coming up in the next few months, in London and Edinburgh. Take a look at our website to find out more and to book your tickets. If you have an event idea which you’d like to hold on behalf of Prospect Burma, get in touch! Our experienced fundraising team can help make your idea a success.

Inspired by these stories? Have an idea that you’d like to put into action? The Prospect Burma team are here to help! Contact our Fundraising Manager Riad Huballah in the office at fundraising@prospectburma.org or 020 7371 0887 to discuss your ideas.

We are also always looking for volunteers to support us in our London office. If you are interested in supporting our Victoria-based team and gaining experience in a busy, small charity, please email a copy of your CV and cover note outlining why you are interested in the role to info@prospectburma.org. Alternatively, if you have any skills or interests which you think would benefit Prospect Burma, we’d love to hear from you.

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Important information for our supporters

Our trustees have decided that PB should be constituted as a charitable incorporated organisation (a CIO). A CIO is like a company; it has limited liability, but it is easier and cheaper to administer and run than any company and is registered only with the Charity Commission. Prospect Burma has set up and registered a CIO (Prospect Burma CIO) with the Charity Commission. Prospect Burma CIO will step into the shoes of Prospect Burma from 1 October 2016. It will not change the work we do and we will continue to raise money to fund scholarships for Burmese students. The main change for our supporters will be our bank account details. In October we will inform you of our new bank details, which all future donations must go to. Regular donors will need to change their existing direct debits with their banks to ensure that we continue to receive your donation.

Thank you for your support

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