The past year has brought with it many challenges for those of us working in Myanmar. The news has been full of atrocities, violence and upheavals, and the optimism of just a few years ago seems to be fading. Despite, and also because of this, Prospect Burma is working to fulfil our vision of Myanmar made new through the expertise of its people. More than ever, we believe that investing in quality education is the best way to help make a peaceful, democratic future for Myanmar.

With the Yangon office fully operational for a year, we are thrilled to be able to provide the kind of on the ground support which was impossible just a short time ago. We are developing programmes that address the barriers that students from remote states and regions face in accessing higher education, bringing education opportunities to more people.

Our work simply would not be possible without the support of our donors, as well as trusts, institutions, corporate partners and foundations. Following a slew of negative press reports about Myanmar, this past year has brought a reduction in our funding, particularly from individual donors. In the coming year, we are determined to reverse this trend by continuing to tell the story of how important an investment in education is.

Thank you so much for your support, I hope you enjoy reading about our work.

Hannah Marcazzo
Executive Director
Our Myanmar office provides important support to our students and alumni, and enables us to both expand our reach within the country, and to strengthen our relationship with each individual. This year we held an alumni conference to build stronger relationships and facilitate networking. We were able to hold interviews at the office or via web calls with applicants to our scholarships programme, resulting in a better understanding of their ability, and their requirements for international study. We have also conducted follow up interviews with returning graduates about their work now, and encouraged feedback on how they would like to see us work in the future. Crucially, our aim is to improve the quality and frequency of contact with our students and alumni, and provide ongoing and relevant support throughout their education and employment journey.

Our year in Yangon

With the evolution of the Myanmar office, the UK office has been able to shift its focus to programme management, fundraising and support. We developed a three year business plan, and worked on the diversification of our fundraising portfolio. We have developed plans to increase the reach of our programmes throughout Myanmar, including the development of our Access to Learning programme, to help reach more people from more remote or under-served areas, including conflict regions.

In 2017-18 the Myanmar office increased its outreach activities, to reach as many potential scholars in the country as possible. Prior to the application period, we spoke to over 2,000 people in five different states, including Rakhine, Shan and Chin states. Over this period, staff members promoted the Prospect Burma scholarship programme, as well as collaborative scholarship opportunities with specific universities. The intention was to introduce the idea of overseas study, the benefits and challenges, and explain the process of applying for a scholarship and the requirements for study.

For the first time in PB’s history, we were able to promote our programmes to some remote regions in Myanmar. This was the first time many of the participants had been visited by a scholarship body. We held information and careers counselling sessions, offering potential applicants vital information on courses and careers that may be available to them, entry requirements and other advice that they might never have been offered before. These sessions are proving vital to the diversity of our scholarships programme.

The registration of our Prospect Burma Myanmar office was officially approved in July 2018.

Our year in London

In 2017 we worked with a number of key stakeholders, including staff, trustees, students, alumni and partners, to help us determine the future path of the organisation, and as a result in 2018 we launched our three year strategic business plan. We focussed particularly on

1. The development of comprehensive programmes to support post Grade 10 education in Myanmar, to help level the playing field for young people living in disadvantaged circumstances
2. The diversification of income streams, with a particular focus on donor stewardship and increasing levels of income for the charity.

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The backbone of PB - Our volunteers

In both the Yangon and the London office, we have a team of incredible, dedicated and generous volunteers, without whom we wouldn’t be able to function! We are extremely grateful to the volunteers who clocked up over 1,000 hours of support time in 2017-2018.

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1. The development of comprehensive programmes to support post Grade 10 education in Myanmar, to help level the playing field for young people living in disadvantaged circumstances
2. The diversification of income streams, with a particular focus on donor stewardship and increasing levels of income for the charity.

3. Increasing brand awareness online, both in Myanmar and the UK through social media, website and targeted messaging.
4. Strengthening of our IT systems to enable improved monitoring and evaluation of our programmes and of our internal processes.
5. Strengthening our governance and organisational policies to ensure transparency to our donors, and that we remain compliant with Charity Commission requirements.
A 2015 Prospect Burma graduate, Pyae Linn Aung, is putting his skills to use in the area of Malaria control.

Pyae Linn Aung decided to pursue a career in Public Health after completing his residential medical training in Patheingyi Township near Mandalay, and witnessing the widespread healthcare issues there.

He told us: “I saw the hardship of people living in rural areas struggling for their lives. I had witnessed that most of them were poor because of the economy, and the country could not provide them a suitable job with a sustained income. Moreover, most of them were suffering from diseases like HIV, TB, malaria as well as non-communicable diseases, and unfortunately could not afford proper treatment. It was then I realised that change is needed in every aspect of our poorly structured healthcare system.”

Prospect Burma awarded Pyae Linn Aung a scholarship for the Master of Public Health programme at Mahidol University, Thailand. His thesis on malaria control and prevention was well received, and he graduated in 2015.

Since graduation Pyae has been working as a Deputy Project Manager for the Myanmar Medical Association, an NGO staffed by public and clinical health workers. He has participated in a number of malaria control campaigns and he hopes to use his expertise to formulate and implement more effective and comprehensive strategies to combat malaria in his country.

In 2015 according to the World Health Organisation there were an estimated 240,000 cases of malaria in Myanmar

Chin State had the highest reported malaria incidence and mortality at the end of the study period

References
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5069869/
Our year in numbers

Scholarships by subject matter 2017-18

- Education: 27%
- Business: 18%
- Arts and humanities: 23%
- Engineering and technology: 6%
- Law, politics and social science: 6%
- Sciences: 13%
- Media and communication: 6%
- Economics and finance: 4%

Graduates

In 2017-18, 26 of our students completed their degrees. We supported 88 students in tertiary education, 61 continuing students and 27 new.

64% of 2016 graduates were living in Myanmar one year post-graduation, and 21% were undertaking further study; 63% of 2014 graduates are living in Myanmar three years post-graduation, with 13% undertaking further study.

71% of 2016 graduates had found employment within a year of graduating and of these 80% are working in the non-profit sector. 87% of 2014 graduates are employed.

29% of 2016 graduates regularly volunteer in their spare time, and 25% of 2014 graduates regularly volunteer.

Our scholarship recipients in 2017 were from diverse ethnicities, including those from conflict states, such as:
- Shan: 4
- Chin: 22
- Kayin: 20
- Rakhine: 3
- Kachin: 10

They are studying in fields vital to Myanmar, including:
- Education
- Medicine
- Peace and conflict
The education system in Myanmar is still far below international standards, and many people are not able to access education at all. Due to internal conflicts and violence, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that there are around 662,400 internally displaced people living in Myanmar*. Access to basic needs including healthcare, sanitation and education for many of these people is severely limited, if available at all. Prospect Burma’s alumni are amongst those working hard to improve the quality of life for Myanmar’s internally displaced people.

“Quality education can produce individuals who value human dignity, who find their talents and become active citizens and responsible stewards of our country.”

- Pann Ei San, Prospect Burma alumna

In 2017 hundreds of thousands of people from Rakhine State were forced to flee to the border with Bangladesh*, following violent attacks of villages. They are now living precariously in refugee camps, where they face many difficulties including lack of access to clean and safe water, sanitation and food supplies.

Pann Ei San received a PB scholarship to study a Master’s in Educational Leadership and Management at St Paul University, Manila, which she completed in 2015. Her own education suffered as a result of conflict in the Kachin state. She told us:

“I have seen students from Kachin State suffering as a result of the civil war and being in need of support. Though many UN organisations and local donors can provide their basic needs: foods, hygiene materials and household things, it is also crucial that they can develop their minds... Education is the best tool to nurture good attitudes and values.”

Today, Pann Ei San works for Karuna Myanmar Social Services, Banmaw, in the educational management department promoting access to education for internally displaced people. Her department has a scholarship programme for young people, and she will also be working on projects such as early childhood care and development.
Our funding

Prospect Burma is able to continue our work due to the support of some fantastic institutions, charitable trusts and foundations.

ACE Foundation
The Boltini Trust
The Camellia Foundation
The Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust
GC Gibson Trust
The James Green Centre
Lady More Charitable Trust
MJ Samuel Charitable Trust
The US Department of State

Aldama Foundation
The Bryan Guiness Charitable Trust
The Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Trust for Health and Education
The Fulmer Charitable Trust
The Jack Ringer Foundation
Ken Soubry Foundation
The Melville Charitable Trust
OVSH Trust

We are incredibly grateful to all of our corporate supporters

Corporate supporters

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Ecological and sustainable development

In Myanmar, the logging trade is important business. The country has the third largest planted teak area in the world*. A year-long ban on logging across Myanmar was implemented by the Government in 2016 to protect the forests, but many issues are still in evidence. The Illegal Logging Portal reports that “illegal logging is a significant problem in the country, with poor governance, weak law enforcement and conflict hindering efforts to address the problem.” PB alumni are among those promoting sustainable forestry practices, to protect the biodiversity of this beautiful country.

A focus on: illegal logging

Myanmar has one of the world's worst deforestation rates. Between 2010 and 2015 Myanmar lost 3.2 million hectares of forests, which is almost the size of Belgium, and around 10.8% of its forest cover, according to a report by the environmental investigation agency.

Saw Sha Bwe Moo is passionate about conservation, sustainability and natural resource management in Myanmar. He became concerned that the fragile political situation in his country would lead to the abuse of natural resources and the illegal trade of wildlife and other goods.

With the support of Prospect Burma, Saw Sha Bwe Moo graduated from Kasetsart University of Thailand with an M.S. in Tropical Forestry in 2015. He is now using the knowledge and skills gained from this programme to promote awareness of conservation and natural resource management in Myanmar.

Saw is currently working for Karen Environmental Social Action Network/Karen Wildlife Conservation Initiative (KESAN/KWCI). The organisation campaigns for biodiversity conservation and offers policy consultancy on environmental issues. He assists with research on the illegal trade of flora and fauna in Karen State.

References:
https://eia-international.org/myanmar-logging-ban-major-step-forest-reform
http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5023e.pdf

“Prospect Burma... encourages unifying diversified ethnic [peoples] of Burma to work together for the betterment of the people of Burma as a whole.”

- Saw Sha Bwe Moo, Prospect Burma alumnus
Our donors

We are incredibly grateful to all of our donors for their generosity over the last year. One of our longest-serving supporters tells us why she donates.

Why I give to Prospect Burma

Genette Dagtoglou is one of Prospect Burma’s longest-standing supporters, who has seen many young students through their studies. Genette got involved in Myanmar in the mid-1990s. She was distributing books to children in Myanmar, and heard about Prospect Burma. ‘Prospect Burma found me a student – Dr Sasa (AKA Taing San) – who was studying medicine in Armenia,’ she says. ‘At the time he was living in poverty, just getting a bit of rice from Indian students in exchange for washing their clothes. Prospect Burma awarded him a scholarship, and then matched me with him as his sponsor. ‘He had two wonderful qualities – he is a great communicator, and communicated his gratitude nonstop. He started emailing me and that began a wonderful correspondence between the two of us. I carried on supporting him through Prospect Burma for five or six years. As soon as he graduated he started teaching primary healthcare to villagers in Chin state. He now runs his own charity, Health and Hope, which has had tremendous success.’

Through Prospect Burma, Genette also supported Dr Sasa’s brother and two of his cousins to get their medical degrees. The value of Prospect Burma’s work is simple, to Genette. ‘Education is key,’ she says. ‘Education is the key to progress, and English Language is the lock that fits that key. You cannot get anywhere these days without English!’

Genette’s support of the students she sponsored has blossomed into some beautiful friendships. ‘I’m still in touch with the students I have sponsored and it’s wonderful to hear how they are doing,’ she says. ‘Prospect Burma is such a reliable organisation which keeps track of its students very well. It also has a really good record of its students going back to Burma – they don’t go and find jobs in other, richer countries. ‘We tell the students again and again how proud we are of them, and that they have given us so much by being so successful.’

Aung Kyaw Khine’s story

The belief that education is the fundamental key to improving Myanmar’s future is what drives Prospect Burma. This is a belief that is, naturally, shared by our students and alumni.

Many of our students choose to study education, as the reform of the education system would make an enormous impact on future generations in Myanmar.

Aung Kyaw Khine is currently studying Primary Education at Asia-Pacific University in Thailand with the support of Prospect Burma. Studying has already broadened her horizons and made her think about the scope of what she could do after she graduates.

“Emotionally, I got many challenges but I have not change my future plan yet. I am trying to keep what I claimed before I came to this university, and I am trying to be a good teacher after my graduation. This university gives me many thought... therefore, I slightly changed my thought that I will work in different regions of Myanmar instead of working only in my hometown. Plus, I will teach equally students who are from different religious backgrounds. Especially, I will try to promote as a teacher that education is the main key to open the door of critical thinking and way to improve our society in rural area in Myanmar.”

The year 2018-19 marks her final year at Asia-Pacific University, after which Aung Kyaw Khine is planning on returning to Myanmar to become a primary school teacher, where she hopes to share her love of learning with generations of young people.
Information and communication technologies

With the introduction of cheap smart phones, internet access is rapidly spreading throughout Myanmar. Rural communities are increasingly going online, enabling a wider reach of information. However, after many years of severely curtailed individual expression, the new access to limitless online material, and sharing of news, comes with its own downfalls. Prospect Burma alumni are at the forefront of IT developments, and our alumnus Thant Sin Oo was fast to notice worrying trends in the negative use of social media.

“A belief that organisations like Prospect Burma are vital to students from Myanmar...I believe that studying abroad is not just about the knowledge that students gain...during my time here [it] has provided me with inspirations on how international friendship can promote better understanding across different cultures.”

- Thant Sin Oo, Prospect Burma alumnus

A focus on: hate speech online

Facebook has fast become one of the most popular websites in Myanmar, with nearly 30 million people subscribed to the site. Prior to the Rohingya crisis in 2017, Facebook was used as “a primary outlet for racial hatred from high-profile individuals inside Myanmar.”*

Before coming to the UK to study, Thant Sin Oo had spent two years working in some of the more remote communities in Myanmar as a support worker. He saw first hand how the rapid introduction of new technologies had an enormous impact on remote and rural communities, both positive and negative. Seeing smart phone technology revolutionise rural ways of life, inspired him to undertake his master’s degree in Media in Development, which he read at SOAS University, UK with Prospect Burma’s support. He told us:

“My dissertation topic looks at how the internet was used to spread hate speech and how rumours and wrong information contribute to create a negative impact on minorities in Myanmar. I chose this topic in hopes of achieving useful findings to guide the counter-messaging projects in the country, to promote tolerance and peace”.

Today Thant Sin Oo is back in Myanmar, and is working for the Tech 4 Peace programme, which helps promote positive online culture.

References: