



SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STREET KIDS

Appeal - 2025



Providing educational opportunities for very poor children in Myanmar since 2009

S4SK is a registered charity in the UK, No: 1131559
www.s4sk.org.uk, e-mail: info.s4sk@gmail.com

Who we are:

In the UK, we are Scholarships for Street Kids (S4SK)

S4SK, 72 Sun Street,
Haworth, Keighley, BD22 8AH, UK

E-mail: info.s4sk@gmail.com

S4SK trustees are:



Sheila Kaye (Trustee), Anna Young (Secretary), Erica Cadbury (Treasurer), George Penaluna (Trustee), John McConnell (Managing Trustee), Michael Slingsby MBE (Patron) and Esther McConnell (Trustee)

In Myanmar, we work together with the Phoenix Academy for Learning and Motivation (PALM)

PALM
306-B Golden Parami Condominium,
Parami Road, Hlaing Township,
Yangon, Myanmar



S4SK, H4SS and PALM, a brief history: We opened our first class for out-of-school children, and awarded our first scholarships in 2007 on the initiative of John McConnell, a British Quaker, who was teaching conflict resolution skills with local NGOs in Yangon at the time.

Scholarships for Street Kids (S4SK) was established as a UK charity in 2009 (Reg. No: 1131559). By 2013 there was a strong team in Myanmar, and we formed a local NGO which, in 2016, registered as Hope for Shining Stars (H4SS), (Reg. No: 1/PT/0172). Myanmar has been in crisis since the military takeover in early 2021, a situation that has been difficult for NGOs to navigate. In March 2023, so as to be able to operate more safely, the Governing Board of H4SS decided to re-register as the Phoenix Academy for Learning and Motivation (PALM), a non-profit, private academy dedicated to provision of education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. All the existing work of H4SS continues as before. New areas of work include capacity-building courses for teachers, expansion of provision of online learning, the inclusion of children living in orphanages, and new classes in Chin State. PALM directors and staff are all drawn from H4SS and have included Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim faiths. We provide the same opportunities to children of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Approximately 50% of our students are girls.

Together, S4SK and PALM work to bring real change to the lives of severely deprived children.



Senior staff and some teachers (left), and some of our students at a gathering to celebrate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (right)

The children we support: Most of the children we help are out-of-school, and work long hours each day to support their families from as young as eight or nine. They make bricks, peel beans, fish, scavenge for recyclables, carry loads on building sites, herd cattle, pick watercress, tap rubber, hawk wares in markets, and more. Many of their families have been illiterate for generations and cannot afford the loss of income incurred by children attending school full-time. Children thus become trapped in poverty, unable to access education at the time in their lives when they need to be in school.



For more about working children, you can see the story of a young brick-maker in one of the videos on the homepage of our website. The work of S4SK and PALM enables child labourers to access education, vocational training, and lead better lives as a result.



Our strategy to enable working children to improve their life chances: Provision of education alone is not enough; since these children are the bread-winners for their families we need to care for their families too. **Over the past 18 years, through engaging with families' problems as they arose, we have developed a strategy which gives out-of-school children access to education.**

1. Accessible education: The first step is the provision of education in a way that does not depend on previous schooling. This is important as most of the children in our classes have never enrolled in school. Our teachers use a child-centred, active-learning approach, with games, quizzes and projects. Classes are fun, and the children are keen to learn. Our **non-formal education (NFE)** classes act as supplementary education classes would in the UK, bringing illiterate and out-of-school children to the approximate level of first or second year in secondary school.

Most of our NFE classes start from scratch. Usually the process begins with an approach from a concerned individual or NGO worker worried about the plight of children on the street in a particular locality. Our staff will then visit the area and set up a meeting with community leaders and parents who will help research the need in the locality. Once the survey is completed, we ask them to join us in establishing a class. If they agree, we set up a Non-formal Education and Child Protection Committee (NFEPC) to help arrange and then oversee the class. These local NFEPCs are invaluable in helping us keep in touch with the community, finding and adapting class venues, and identifying educated people locally who could be trained as teachers.

Once started, the class becomes part of the day to day lives of desperately poor families, and as a result we begin to encounter, and engage with, the problems they face.



The story of U Win Family Orphanage NFE class:

The U Win Family Shelter originated about 20 years ago when U Win and his wife Daw Cho were farming in Hlegu. Daw Cho was preparing pig feed one day when she caught two young girls stealing the mixture. They explained that their mother had left home, their father had passed away, and they had no food: "Even a pig's life would be better". Moved by their story, Daw Cho and U Win adopted the girls, and established the orphanage.

In the last two years, many children arrived from conflict-affected areas, especially Karen, Chin, Kachin and Shan states. These children found it difficult to enrol in local schools; as well as lacking transfer certificates, many of were not fluent in Burmese language. Thus, in the 2024–2025 academic year, the orphanage was happy for PALM to open two primary level non-formal education classes (along with the online secondary level class for older students).

Initially, teaching was difficult. As well as language difficulties, there were discipline problems, while some would skip class to play. However, as formerly uninterested students began enjoying class activities, the children's behaviour gradually improved.

In competitions marking Myanmar Children's Day, 12 of these students won awards in storytelling and puzzle-solving contests. One girl, who had come to the orphanage after having been abandoned shared:

"I used to skip class by pretending to have a headache, and didn't enjoy studying. But now, I'm happy to attend, win prizes, and dream about my future. The classes are fun, and our teacher is very patient."

Such has been the children's improvement, many have been accepted by local government schools for the 2025-26 school year.

Top to bottom: Daw Cho with her children , Yoon leading a class in the rainy season, Naw Lady Smile guiding students, and Daw Swe teaching, all at the U Win Family shelter



Daw Yoon Htet Htet (NFE Teacher): “I have been teaching with H4SS and PALM since 2017. When I first started, I was nervous and unprepared. I didn’t know what kind of people I’d be working with and had no experience—just a strong desire to learn.

Emotional journey: When I first entered the workplace, my mother was the one who gave me the most support. I was shy and hesitant, but she personally walked with me to my new job. When I came home, she would ask how things went and discuss everything with me. When I told her the seniors were kind and helpful, she smiled quietly, sometimes with tears in her eyes. I know she was happy that I belonged to such an organisation.

At first, I was afraid that if I made mistakes, I’d be scolded or judged. But from the first day of training, everyone was smiling. I expected a strict employer-employee relationship, but they treated me like a younger sibling.

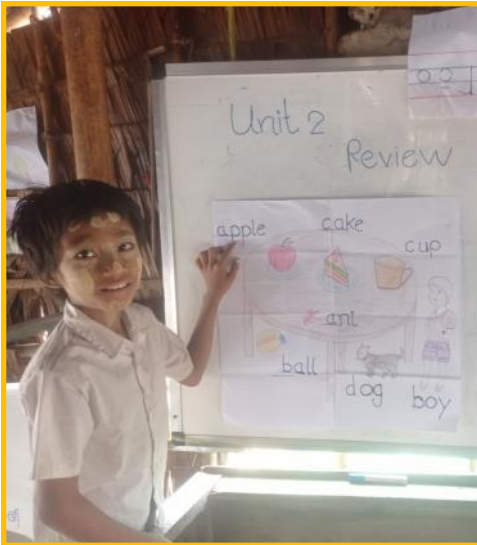
When I didn’t understand something, they patiently explained it, and whenever problems came up, we solved them together. Our organization felt like a family.

Of course, I’ve faced many challenges in my work, but whenever conflicts arose, senior staff have created space for discussion and compromise. This wasn’t a place where bosses just gave orders and left the rest to subordinates. Even if someone held a junior position, they were still treated with respect, and had things explained with reason and care. Even when I felt stressed, I was still happy. Comparing it to other jobs, I can clearly see the difference. I’m deeply thankful to Po Po John, Siyamagyi Daw Aye Aye Thinn, and all the teachers who guided me from the beginning. I’ve come to value my work deeply. Thanks to their impartial leadership and conflict resolution, we’ve been able to work harmoniously until today.

Working as part of a team improved my mind-set. Learning about child development and children’s rights helped me assist those around me. My communication skills also improved. I feel like I’ve grown a lot over the years. While supporting Parent Engagement activities, not only did I help families, but I also changed personally. For example, I started saving money and budgeting household expenses.

Tragedy: In July 2019, my mother began getting treatment at the hospital for kidney failure. My working hours were 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Even though my senior colleagues encouraged me to take leave, my mother didn’t allow it. She said I had to fulfil my responsibilities. She insisted she was okay and told me not to miss work, so I never took leave. That was the most exhausting time in my life. My older brother and I took turns caring for her. I would finish work at 11 AM, rush home, shower, eat, and send food to my brother, then go to the hospital. I’d stay the whole night with my mother. At 6:30 AM the next morning, I’d come home, do chores, prepare meals, and head back to class. I did this for about two months.

The hardest moment was realizing that when my mother was in pain, and in her final days, she stayed silent because she didn’t want to worry me. Even when she was suffering, she never let it show—she just wanted me to focus on my work. She passed away on October 20, 2019. That loss shattered me. Not long after, my co-workers and senior staff came to visit me. They didn’t just offer condolences—they brought warmth, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. Their kindness and positivity helped lift me from grief and made all the difference in helping me heal.”



Working with Parents: Sometimes, dealing with parents was difficult. There were times when older children had to stop learning due to family problems. In such situations, I tried to negotiate with the parents. While many children returned to my class, some had to enter the workforce.

The value of emergency support: What stands out most to me is how effective emergency support can be—not just for immediate relief but for long-term impact. When children and families receive timely help, their lives become more stable. That stability lets children focus on learning. During the monsoon season, flooding devastates entire communities. Parents can't go to work, and many struggle just to eat. But when we step in to distribute basic necessities (like rice, oil, and other food) it gives them breathing room. Families can survive without withdrawing their children from school. We even provided bamboo to raise the floors of homes in flood-prone areas, helping them stay safe and dry. That kind of support means kids don't miss their learning, even during the hardest times.

Results from Parent Engagement Sessions: Through the Parent Engagement sessions, we saw real transformation. Parents learned about family planning and were guided in starting small businesses. Some who had been drowning in debt began to turn their finances around. I noticed clear changes; parents started treating their children differently. They became more thoughtful, more understanding. They stopped using harmful discipline and began seeing education as a way to change their families' futures.

Not every challenge disappeared, but I could see visible progress in both attitude and behaviour. Parents who once didn't value education or didn't understand their own children's rights are now trying. And I truly believe that these small changes, happening now, will one day be remembered by their children.

Many of these parents had no access to school themselves. They grew up in survival mode. But because of S4SK and PALM, and the commitment of our team, both parents and children are improving, together. **And that, to me, is the most meaningful outcome of all. "**

From top to bottom: Daw Yoon Htet Htet in her NFE class, with parents, and teaching at an orphanage

Daw Aye Aye Thinn writes: “We are always searching for children we can help, but the current situation of insecurity in the country makes it risky to open classes in areas where PALM is not already known to the local authorities. So, we are keen to partner with local volunteer groups which are already established. This year, some of the trainees who joined one of our teacher professional development courses (funded by UNESCO) came from a small civil society organisation (Junior Dream) which already was running an occasional class in Dala, south of Yangon across the estuary. Then, through networking with other NGOs, we identified another area of need in Hlaing-thayar, to the west of the city. With the recommendation of a respected local community organization, we could establish a class there too. There are large numbers of out-of-school children in both areas, and both classes are now underway. As with each NFE class, we researched the need in both areas, then gathered families and local community leaders together to assess the need of each family, enroll students, and set up local NFE committees.

Work done by the children in Dala, which is near the docks, included scavenging, selling fish, and selling sparrows (for passers-by to liberate and so make merit), while those in Hlaing-thayar were scavenging, hawking in the local market, and begging.

Daw Eaindray, of Junior Dream, in Dala, told us: ‘We have called our class the ‘Hope NFE Class’. The children were very happy to study and I am pleased to work with PALM together for their better future. Some parents mentioned that they wanted to see their children with some decent job such as hairdresser. The class time is 12:30 – 3:30 pm, and the children usually work both before and after.”

Daw Tapyay, who is a teacher in the Hlaing-thayar class, observed: ‘We decided to call our class ‘Metta Garden’ (Loving-kindness Garden). PALM’s emergency support system is very effective. After the meeting to explain that if children come to class every day their families will receive food, the parents have been sending the children to the class regularly. I am pleased to teach them, though not satisfied with the quality of my own teaching yet.”’.



Sparrow sellers, teacher training, recruitment of students, Daw Eaindray with her new class, Dala students and teachers, and Metta Garden class (left)



2. Compensation for lost income: Many of our pupils are the breadwinners for their families, so time in class means a lowering of family income. During the current civil war, with prices of essentials fluctuating wildly, we have been providing food and hygiene hampers rather than cash payments. This helps ensure that families have what they need to look after their children.

3. Social work: With little or no experience of schooling themselves, parents often do not understand the need for consistency in attendance, and readily withdraw children from class to help at home or work if money is tight. Our teachers act as social workers, visiting homes and ready to help with whatever domestic problem threatens the home environment for the children. We have a bursary fund too, with which to pay medical bills, repair homes etc.

Ma May Sa Bae Phoo's story: Ma May Sa Bae Phoo is from a village in upper Myanmar. Her father used to earn a living selling boiled corn to railway passengers, while her mother did agricultural work in season, and wove bamboo panels at other times. Tragedy struck in 2006 when her father slipped while trying to board a train and had to have both legs amputated. The 7,000/- Kyat he earned daily was no more, but outgoings were higher since they now included his medical costs. May Sa Bae's mother tried to solve the problem by involving him in her work. She would carry him in a basket on her back to the fields, where he could weed beds. She would help him throughout the day. **People who knew the family said that she was a 'good wife with a big, kind heart'.** After he got prosthetic legs, he could balance sufficiently to allow him to weave bamboo panels. However, an asthma condition limited the time he could spend in a dusty environment, and the family economy was always on a knife edge.

May Sa Bae was born in 2009, and attended school till she was ten. With the closure of schools during the pandemic in 2020, she helped out at home. With the downturn of the economy in 2021, local job opportunities shrunk too, so May Sa Bae had to work. Luckily, in 2023, a neighbour told her mother about the online classes that her own daughter was attending at the PALM Learning Centre. The related benefit of support for students' families meant that a child could join without a financial loss to the family.

"When I began at the Learning Centre, although the teachers treated me kindly, I felt afraid of everything. I just wanted to stay alone and I hardly talked to anyone. When it rained, I would get homesick and cry. During the music period, one song in particular would make me homesick; I would put

my face in my arms on the desk and cry. The senior students were kind, and that helped me a lot. **Later I felt much better and, because I didn't need to worry about my daily survival, I could focus on the lessons.** I had a good opportunity to study here, joining the online classes with a laptop. In addition to normal subjects, we could learn computer skills. We have a weekly meeting with teachers, and can openly share issues related to meals, social dealing, and even our feelings and emotions. I feel the Learning Centre is a happy environment for our study.

My dream is to become a nurse. I remember, whenever my mum took me to the clinic, being impressed by how doctors helped their patients. **At home, I used to fill tubes with water and give pretend injections to my friends.** Whenever someone asked, I would always say I wanted to be a doctor. At the Learning Centre, occasionally I've looked after friends who weren't feeling well, staying by their side and helping them with whatever they needed. **It makes me happy to be able to help people. If I become a nurse, I must have patience, be tolerant, and work with a kind heart.** To achieve my goal, I believe I need to become better at English because the names of medicines and instruction leaflets are often in English."

May Sa Bae's mother said: "Thank you PALM. I am proud of my daughter. I encouraged her to learn to speak like the educated people. I want her to have her own business. If we have to work as a worker at others' business, daily survival can be difficult when there is no work to be had."



May Sa Bae's father weaving bamboo panels, treats for all at the Learning Centre, and at a day out to celebrate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

5. Successive opportunities: Provision of successive opportunities for education and training to bring about real change in children's lives has been a key part of our philosophy from the start. Vocational training (VT) scholarships sponsored by S4SK have included health and social care, sewing and tailoring, hairdressing, electrical appliance maintenance, domestic electrical circuitry, plumbing, mobile phone repair, welding, motorbike and auto repair, air-con servicing, network engineering and dentistry to name a few. Once qualified, students can access low-interest start-up loans linked with the family savings scheme.

Ma Nan Yu Hlaing's story:

Ma Nan Yu was born in 2009, in a village near Hlegu. With both parents working as brick-makers (her father specialised in kiln operation), she was able to attend the local government school. When the school closed during the pandemic in 2019, she helped out at home. As the economy of the country declined in 2021 following the coup, the family migrated to Rakhine State to find work, returning to the Hlegu area in 2022. The family finances were not in a good state so, rather than send Nan Yu back to formal school, her parents enrolled her in the local PALM NFE class.

"Though I couldn't return to the government school, as the youngest daughter, my parents wanted me to succeed. So, they made the effort to send me to the PALM NFE class in Kyau Kwe Le Kyin. The walk from my village took about 30 minutes, crossing rubber plantations and hills. It was even harder during the rainy season when we had to cross narrow bridges."

In 2023 the family's situation worsened; a stroke paralysed her father, and her mother had become too infirm to manage the heavy work at the brick



factory:

"My family was struggling financially. One of my sisters was bright but had to quit school and go to work in a factory. **I desperately wanted to continue my education, so asked to enrol at the PALM Learning Centre. PALM continued to support my family and even helped with Dad's medical costs.**

Sewing has always interested me. When I was young, I used scraps from around the house to sew clothes for dolls. Now at the Learning Centre, as well as following the online and computer skills classes, I have joined the Sewing and Tailoring course. I really enjoy it. **My aim is become a designer and create new clothing styles.**

People used to belittle our family because we were uneducated. **Now that I am getting good marks in the online subjects and learning how to sew professionally, I don't feel inferior any more.** I have gained the confidence to speak in public too, **and even won third prize in the Talents of Stars impromptu speech competition.**

My relationships with others have improved a lot. I often volunteer to take on responsibilities at the Learning Centre, and always feel good when I complete tasks. When I return home during holidays, I help more with household chores of my own accord. When I visited my aunt's house, I got up early in order to help her with various tasks. Everyone in the family was surprised, and praised me for being more responsible than before. I am happy to be more active in this way.

My goal remains unchanged — to become a clothing designer — and I will continue learning and fulfilling the requirements to achieve that dream."

Nan Yu, and taking part in groupwork
as part of an online science class

6. Poverty alleviation: Many of our families are in debt to money-lenders at interest rates of between 20% and 30% per month. Typically, moneylenders do not push for the debt to be repaid early, preferring to collect the interest over months and years. The impact on children's well-being is huge, with child labour often funding these interest payments. Since 2019 H4SS-PALM has been establishing savings groups to enable parents to get free from debt

Daw Aye Aye Myint (Operations Manager for NFE and poverty alleviation) describes the aims as: "1. to alleviate poverty among parents of our students, 2. to foster good habits of household budgeting and regular saving, 3. to free members from the burden of high-interest loans, 4. to provide low interest loans so that parents can address urgent needs, 5. to allow members to borrow capital for investment and operate businesses, 6. to establish a 'money tree' for future generations within the family through consistent saving over the long term, 7. to enable parents to continue supporting their children's education as they go into vocational training or further education, and 8. to learn to support each other when anyone is in need."

In the words of some of the savers:

"I took out a loan from the group and was able to contribute to **buying a plot of land**. Later, I could **buy a meter and connect electricity**. After paying off that debt, I took out another loan to **start my own business** making banana chips. It's going well; I can now run my own business from home, which gives me more time. My husband also attends the meetings now."

"I was interested in this group from the beginning. **They are organized and there is warmth among them. When one of the mother's husband passed away, the group, along with PALM teachers, came to offer support. I really liked that and decided to join.** I save money every month without fail. Now I have absolutely no debt. **I will never leave this group.**"



Savings group meeting



Daw San Myint and her son in front of their home (above) and after repair (below)



"Having the savings group means that if we need money, we don't have to borrow from money-lenders at high-interest rates. **We can borrow money from our own group at a lower interest rate. It is also a benefit when we save, because we receive interest from others who borrow.**"

The story of Daw San Myint:

"I am a single mum. My husband left when I was three months pregnant. My son is 12 now. He and I live with my mother and brother. I have had to work since I was young, so I have no qualifications. My brother and I both do agricultural work. He digs wells, and I pick water spinach, transplant and harvest paddy, pick groundnuts, and collect firewood. We used to try to increase our income by gambling, always hoping to be lucky, but we stayed poor. For long, our roof leaked but we never had enough money to fix it, just put bowls out to catch the drips.

It was in a workshop for parents that I learned my mistake, and decided to stop gambling. Some of the class committee members encouraged us to start saving too, so **I joined the saving group and started saving the money I would have gambled.** I sent my son to the NFE class each day so we could receive emergency support of food from PALM. **Because we no longer gamble, and have been saving consistently, we have been able to repair the house and buy a motorbike to enable my brother to get more work.**

Sending my son to the PALM class has not only helped his education but also brought about positive changes for our family. **I am happy that I chose the right path for us both. Unlike me, my son will get an education.** I will continue to encourage him to work hard, and collaborate with the teachers to improve his life as best I can. **I am working hard to help my child establish himself in life.** Our lives have changed in ways I did not dream of. Thank you teachers and seniors at PALM."

7. Specialist teacher training: Teaching children from illiterate families, and with little or no previous schooling, is challenging. Each year PALM runs teacher capacity-building courses which emphasise the child-centred, active-learning approach which, we know, from 18 years' experience, works with out-of-school children. The courses are open to teachers from other NGOs, and this year PALM has partnered with UNESCO to train teachers in areas where there are large numbers of children whose families have been displaced by fighting. In the past year, 61 teachers from 21 organisations have participated, with courses taking place in Taungoo and Padigon (both in Bago region), Hpa-an (in Kayin State), and Yangon.

The general objective of this training is for participants to understand how child-centred, active learning approaches to NFE can be effective in helping children re-engage with education.

Specific topics covered were:

- Key concepts of education and learning;
- Cognitive, social and emotional development of children;
- A learner-centred, active-learning approach to teaching that keeps students engaged;
- How to design lesson-plans so that lessons are activity-based and enjoyable for students;
- The different purposes of assessment, that is formative assessment (which is used to encourage and guide students, and help teachers reflect on technique), and summative assessment (which is used to assess student achievement);
- How to develop a culture of positive discipline within the class, and be able to manage classes well.



PALM—UNESCO collaboration on training new teachers to work with internally displaced and out-of-school children



The PALM Learning Centre: The PALM Learning Centre opened in 2014 to help alumni of our non-formal education (NFE) classes make the transition to the more formal approach they will experience in vocational colleges. The centre currently accommodates 10 girls in two buildings and 7 boys in a third. The centre is overseen by three resident teachers.

While computing and sewing courses are conducted in person, academic subjects are provided through the Online Education Project (see p. 28), with the centre's teachers acting as class facilitators, and supervising a homework class each evening. There are weekly meetings at which students can share any issues arising in community life, and supervised homework classes each evening. As with all our work, there is an emphasis on active participation. Students are encouraged to express their views and support each other. In view of the big changes taking place in our students' lives as they move to work and educational environments, we make sure that counselling is always available.

The Learning Centre also hosts a savings scheme serving the families of four NFE classes in the vicinity of Hlegu. Together, staff dedicate themselves to the improvement of the lives of our students and their families.



Daw Aye Aye Thinn and John McConnell with some of the students and teachers living at the Learning Centre



A computer class at the Learning Centre

In the words of current and former students:

"In the past, I wasn't very good at expressing myself, but after attending the Learning Centre, my communication skills improved significantly. **Now in the workplace, those interpersonal skills have been incredibly beneficial.** I've learned how to communicate effectively in a professional setting. I've also become better at listening and accepting feedback from my supervisors."

"The teachers always paid close attention to us and supported our needs. Even my own parents couldn't guide me the way the teachers did. Everything was for our future. **They told us again and again, if we make the effort, we'll see the results.** Right now, I'm attending a nursing course. If I hadn't come to the Learning Centre, I would probably have no clear direction—just wandering without knowing where I was headed. But after coming here, **the teachers clearly explained what paths would lead to what outcomes, and what choices would shape my future. For that, I'm truly grateful.**"

"I became more confident in writing, and my communication skills improved significantly. Learning English was also very beneficial. **While staying outside during nursing training, I remembered the happy time at the Learning Centre and this made me feel safer and more secure.**"

"I've learned how to communicate and get along well with others, how to live and take care of myself, and how to solve problems. Thanks to the teachings I received at the Learning Centre, I can handle situations more calmly and easily. For example, when it comes to PowerPoint presentations, I can speak confidently and clearly. **I'm comfortable leading discussions, presenting, and introducing topics without fear or hesitation.**"

Sewing and tailoring at the Learning Centre: We have been running sewing and tailoring classes since 2010. Currently, students can access a basic course at the Learning Centre, taught by Daw Than Than Mon, then join a respected fashion design company for specialist training and possible employment.

At the time of writing it is the beginning of the school year, so these four students have just completed their first garments.

Student voices:

"Since it was my first time sewing, I wondered if it would turn out well. It was also the first time I made anything for myself. **After trying it on and hearing others say it suited me, I liked it even more.** It also made me want to learn more. **I started imagining a shirt that would go well with the shorts, and now I want to sew that too."**

"I'm happy that **I've gone from not knowing anything to being able to sew a pair of shorts.** It's not perfect yet, so I know I need to keep trying. I'll continue to put in more effort and sew neater stitches. **I won't give up on learning until I can sew perfectly."**



U Zaw Zaw Win teaching the computer studies class



U Zaw Zaw (Computer Studies teacher): "I've been teaching computer studies at the PALM Learning Centre for about three years, now . At first, I thought I'd have to put in a lot of effort to teach such disadvantaged children. But it turned out not to be so bad. The more classes I taught, the easier it became. There are one or two students who need a bit more attention than others, but overall, we keep it light, and I don't pressure them, so the children can learn easily.

My goal is for them to have a solid fundamental understanding of computers for their work, so they're ready for the workplace. I want them to be better than others, to instantly know about computers, and for others to be able to rely on them. That's my main wish. **In office settings, if they know these things, they'll be able to support others.**

The curriculum this year consists of 5 months of basic knowledge (1st month introductory and MS Word, 2nd month Powerpoint, the 3rd month Excel, and the remaining two months for practice and revision. Then, last 4 months of the school year will be for advanced topics. If time permits, I plan to teach about CCTV, Wi-Fi, and other related topics."

Talents of Stars – empowering children through creativity:

Daw Theint Sandhi Lwin (Operations Manager, Online Education Project) writes:

“On 13th February 2024, which is Myanmar Children’s Day, the Talents of Stars event showcased the abilities, creativity, and potential of vulnerable children receiving online education. The event provided a platform for these children to demonstrate their unique talents in three categories: extemporaneous talk, role play, and riddle challenges. The goal was to inspire self-confidence, foster creativity, and highlight the incredible growth of children who, despite facing adversity, possess immense potential.

The day began with the **extemporaneous talk** competition, where 13 brave young speakers were tasked with delivering impromptu speeches on a variety of topics. Each participant had just seven minutes to present their ideas, testifying to their quick thinking, clarity of expression, and the courage to speak in front of an audience. Ma Niang was awarded first prize for a thoughtful speech about the people who inspire her and the values that guide her life. Second prize was awarded to Ma Thinn for her positive vision as to how teachers can shape the futures of both children and society. Ma Nan Yu was awarded third place for a heartfelt speech describing how literature has shaped her perspectives and provided her with inspiration. **The confidence and poise with which these children spoke was testament to the value of non-formal education, which encourages self-expression, critical thinking, and the ability to share ideas in public.**

Next came the **role-play** competition, where five teams displayed their creativity, teamwork, and English-speaking abilities. Each team presented a playlet based on a children’s story, allowing them to step into different characters and bring fictional scenarios to life. The Win Family Shelter group claimed the first prize for their performance of “*The Red Hen and His Friends*” which highlighted the value of responsibility and preparedness.



The Learning Center group’s performance of “*The Selfish Crocodile*”, a meaningful story about sharing and kindness, gained second place. Third place was awarded to the Se Village group for their performance of “*The Ant and the Grasshopper*,” which stressed the importance of hard work and preparation. Their performances brought light and energy to the stage.

The **riddle challenge** tested the intellectual abilities of the children, requiring them to work in separate teams, first to compose, then solve each other’s riddles. The teams, each consisting of five members, had to collaborate, think critically, and work under time pressure.

The first prize was awarded to students from Kyauk Khe Lei Kwin village for their outstanding teamwork and sharp problem-solving skills. Se Village Group took second place, impressing the judges with their calm and methodical approach. This challenge highlighted not only the problem-solving abilities of the children but also their ability to collaborate effectively under pressure—skills that are crucial for both personal growth and future success. Many of these children, who had previously struggled with self-doubt, gained in self-confidence, realizing that they were capable of achieving more than they had imagined. The event underscored the importance of providing vulnerable children with the tools and support they need to succeed—whether through education, mentorship, or opportunities like Talents of Stars.

As our students grow and develop, it gives me great satisfaction to see how their journeys unfold, knowing that the education we provide is contributing to their educational and personal development.”

Ma Niang giving her prize-winning talk, Learning Centre students performing The Hungry Crocodile, and an appreciative audience

8. Online education project: Our Online Education Project (OEP) began in a small way during the pandemic, and has grown year by year. As well as providing secondary education to alumni of our NFE classes, the project expanded to include young people from various ethnic backgrounds who had fled violence in their home villages and were staying in orphanages. They could not enroll in government schools due to lack of ‘transfer certificates’, so had lost access to education. PALM set up online learning hubs in four orphanages, several villages in upper Myanmar and Hlegu district, and of course in the PALM Learning Centre in Hlegu. The project developed well, with all involved discovering what was possible with online learning. However, the introduction of conscription in 2024 was worrisome for orphanage directors since many of these students were approaching 18 years of age. Thus, many decided it was safer to return to their home villages, while some were able to enroll in formal school. Our project provided them with quality education over the school year that they would not otherwise have had. Thus, we begin this school year with a substantially different constituency of students.

Daw Theint (Operations Manager, Online Education Project) writes: “June is the beginning of the school year in Myanmar and, at time of writing, 123 students have enrolled with classes in 7 villages in different parts of Myanmar, though we expect student numbers to increase in the next few months. They are taught by 11 online teachers, and supported by 14 class facilitators. We teach Burmese, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Life Skills to grades 5 to 9, English, Mathematics and Life Skills to grade 10 (all following the government curriculum), and English and Life Skills to grades 11 and 12 (following the Cambridge curriculum). Classes are monitored on a daily basis from the PALM office.

In some classes, there are problems with electricity supply and adequacy of broadband signal. As to power, we get by with provision of inverters and batteries to some classes, and



solar generators to others. Connection to the internet is achieved by careful choice of mobile broadband providers according to the best signal in each area.

By preparing group activities and interactive lessons, our teachers create an active learning environment within the digital classroom. In parallel, class facilitators assist with technical issues, guide students, and act as classroom managers. One of their biggest challenges is helping students resist the temptations of social media, and stay focused on the lessons. **The culture of active learning helps hugely;** facilitators set up clear class expectations, and facilitate interactive activities to maintain interest. It was good to see how students’ confidence increased throughout the year.

As the program continued, it became clear that the cooperation of both teachers and facilitators was the key to success. Progress wasn’t just about teaching—it was about nurturing confidence, overcoming obstacles, and empowering young minds to reach their full potential, even when the path seemed uncertain.

It gives me much satisfaction that we were able to provide a quality education to our students. In addition to teaching, we organized various activities such as the Talents of Stars competition, educational and entertainment events for World Children's Day, and youth empowerment workshops, giving students a more rounded education. We took care to nurture students’ emotional development and ability to problem-solve. **I believe this project has helped them develop strong personal qualities to face real-world challenges.”**

U Arrmhan (Burmese Language teacher) writes: “Last year, most of the online students were from ethnic backgrounds and were weak in the Myanmar language, which was a challenge for me. I worked hard to help them grasp the soft and subtle nature of the language. My effort was worthwhile; **a young Chin girl, who struggled to speak Burmese at the start of the year, actually won first prize in the Talents of Stars**

An online class at the Learning Centre,
a life skills class, and Daw Theint

extemporary talk competition. I was delighted to see that she, and the other ethnic children, were able to express their feelings both in writing and in speech.”

Daw Wah Wah (Science teacher): “At the beginning of the year, I noticed that some children felt afraid of both the subject and of me as their teacher. So, I made a conscious effort to **transform the classroom into a joyful and welcoming learning space.** The results were very satisfactory. The students began to participate with excitement and enthusiasm, and their scientific understanding improved significantly.”

Daw Mya Thida (Mathematics teacher): “When teaching Mathematics online, I used a variety of methods to engage the students. Although their interest was quite low to start with, **by the end of the year, there was a significant increase in their appreciation and respect for the subject.**”

Daw Jamin (English Language teacher): “Like the ‘Starfish Story’ I read when I was young, **we cannot save everyone, but for those we can reach, we can help a lot!** I’m deeply grateful to PALM for making it possible for out-of-school children to access quality education. These children, though young, have shown a remarkable understanding of life. They approach online learning with genuine interest and enthusiasm, and witnessing this has brought me immense joy. **In a country like ours, where development is needed in every corner, having the opportunity to nurture and guide these little wildflowers has been one of the most valuable experiences of my life.**”

And some student evaluations:

"I enjoy attending online classes. **I especially like doing science experiments.** Before, I used to speak quite rudely. But now, after roleplaying different situations in class, I've become more polite in my speech and behavior."

"As the new school year begins, I feel both excited about learning new lessons and worried that I might not be able to keep up. **But I know that, once I get into the rhythm of regular learning, I start to understand and know new things, which makes me happy and interested.** Since I didn't win an award last year, I'm determined to try my best throughout this year to win awards."

Online Education students and staff taking part in a celebration of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



The S4SK-PALM response to the earthquake: PALM is working with other NGOs in the Myanmar NGO Network (MNN) to relieve the suffering of families in the regions affected by the recent earthquakes. Our appeal in the UK raised £10,351.81, of which approximately £7,000 has already been transferred to Myanmar and, at time of writing, (July), the rest is in transit.

Daw Aye Aye Thinn writes: “In 2025, a powerful earthquake struck central Myanmar, compounding the hardships faced by many communities. Thanks to the prompt contribution of S4SK to the Earthquake Response Fund, we were able to support affected families in Mandalay, Amarapura, and Nyaung Shwe Townships. Our response has included providing solar lamps, water purification systems, and rebuilding of homes. **I felt the loving-kindness of our long-term donors so strongly during this time, and I extend my deepest gratitude. We promise to honour your generosity by ensuring your support is used effectively and efficiently.**”

In May, three NGOs joined with PALM on a Myanmar NGO Network visit to Mandalay and Inlay regions. We were accompanied by the husband of one of our teachers who is a water filtration engineer. The specific contributions from S4SK-PALM during this visit, and after, are as follows:

1. **Water purification:** In Kyaukse, in Mandalay Region, our engineer set up two units serving over 50 households and 190 family members. More are planned for the future.
2. **Rebuilding of houses:** In Nyaungswe, near Taung Gyi, we sponsored rebuilding of two houses for very poor families. The photos are of one of these, for a single mum with her four children. More are planned.
3. **Solar lamps:** The earthquake left many without power so we have been providing hundreds of solar lanterns to families in temporary shelters.
4. **Rebuilding of a water tower:** Subsequent to this visit we have been working with other MNN members and are currently sponsoring the rebuilding of a 2,400 gallon water tank serving 431 families in Mandalay region. The work is ongoing, and we are open to support more.



Collapsed water tower

Building a new home for Daw Kyan and her family

Daw Kyan is a single mother whose home was wrecked by the earthquake. Her eldest daughter narrowly escaped a sexual assault while walking to an unsafe, distant toilet. Fortunately, nearby residents intervened and prevented the incident, but the experience deeply traumatized the family and highlighted their urgent need for a secure toilet. In response, PALM commissioned the rebuilding of her house, now with a more secure toilet.

Daw Aye Aye Thinn writes: “When we visited, Daw Kyan broke down in tears as she expressed her gratitude, saying she could never thank the donors enough for their kindness.”



PALM admin and finance team: The purchase and timely distribution of teaching-learning materials for our classes, and emergency supplies for desperate families, is down to the hard work of PALM’s amazing Finance and Admin team. We are hugely grateful to them.

Maung Than Zaw Win's story: "My parents used to work as brick-makers. They would wake up at 2 am and work until 11 am, then work again from 1 pm until 6 pm. At the age of five, I enrolled at a monastic school, but it was very far from our house; to get there by 8.30 am, I had to leave at 6 am. Then, **when I was seven, some friends and I were caught by child abductors as we left school. That day was the scariest day of my life.** One of us managed to escape and run to a nearby house for help. The householder raised the alarm with neighbours and the kidnappers ran away. After that, my father started taking us to and from school.

We moved house near where my aunt lived when I was seven and, despite having no birth certificate, my mother managed to enrol me in a government school. However, it was only for two years; my father became ill and could not work and my mother's health was poor, so at the age of nine, I started working in brickmaking and construction sites. It was my aunt who told my mother about the H4SS class nearby, and I enrolled there aged thirteen. **I studied happily there, and then at the Learning Centre where I became very interested in computing.** Then I enrolled at E4Y Pre-vocational College.

During the second year the family economy became worse, and I nearly left E4Y to work, but my younger brother dropped out of school to help at home in my place. I love my younger brother very much, so I enrolled him in the H4SS (now PALM) class that I used to attend.

I have had several jobs, some of them using the computer skills I learned at the Learning Centre. The last job was with the Myanmar branch of a Chinese company, where I both designed wallets and helped keep accounts. After working there for some time, the director, who is Chinese, offered me similar work in their garment factory in China, which is where I have been for the past 9 months. If all goes well, I hope to be promoted to work in the factory office next year."



Than Zaw Win at the Learning Centre, and at his desk in the garment factory in China

Daw Aye Aye Thinn (PALM, Executive Director): "Since the COVID-19 period and throughout the subsequent years of political instability, our organization has struggled alongside the people of Myanmar. At times, I have felt overwhelmed. Yet, **whenever I witness the progress of the children, I regain the strength and determination to continue**, knowing that we bring real hope and opportunity to the young people we reach.

In 2024–25, eleven NFE alumni students (3 boys and 8 girls) were enrolled in vocational training programs. These included sewing and tailoring, fashion design, nurse-aid, pharmacy, and car and motorbike mechanic courses. One boy, after completing his mechanic training, was even offered a position as an assistant trainer at the center where he studied. Some of the girls are continuing with advanced courses in fashion and design and now dream of becoming successful fashion designers.



Equally inspiring are the positive changes we see in the families of our NFE students. Many parents have adopted healthier lifestyles, moving away from harmful behaviors such as gambling, drinking, and abusive punishments. Instead, they are embracing good practices like saving money, managing household finances and being kinder to their children. **Another source of strength for me is the incredible dedication of our teachers and staff.** Our NFE and online class teachers work tirelessly to deliver lessons using active learning methods, while also nurturing the children's resilience and confidence."

Daw Myint Myint Shwe (PALM, Finance Director): "PALM has been functioning well for two years now, with the great support of S4SK. Our team has worked well together, and gained valuable learnings from engaging with the problems that we have faced. As a consequence, we have good networking and communication with partners (UN, INGOs, LNGOs and CBOs). We always try the best for the strengthening and upgrading of our organization in order to ensure its long term development."



Dear Friends and Supporters,

I would like to thank you all for your generous support, both for our ongoing work, and for our earthquake appeal.

The suffering of the very poor communities we serve has been compounded by the civil war there, and by the earthquake. Our friends in PALM have faced each new challenge with compassion, courage and real commitment to give disadvantaged children a chance in life. It is a privilege to be able to work with them.

Please help us if you can. S4SK is a small charity. Apart from the costs of our appeal, all admin costs at S4SK, including communication and travel, are covered by donation from the trustees, so you can be sure that roughly 99.5% of your donation will go to the work you see here. Please help us to continue to bring hope to the lives of these terribly disadvantaged children.

In friendship,



John McConnell (Managing Trustee, S4SK)

Please support our work:

1. By cheque or charity voucher to the treasurer at the address below, and made payable to Scholarships for Street Kids;

2. By electronic transfer to Scholarships for Street Kids Lloyds Bank plc, Branch: Hustlergate, Bradford, A/C No: 00376613, Sort Code: 30-91-12. Or use the IBAN code: GB68LOYD30911200376613. Please email the treasurer at: s4skfinance@gmail.com when you make a donation;

3. By regular donation (Standing Order) please email the treasurer to receive a donation form at: s4skfinance@gmail.com.

Gift Aid: If you are a taxpayer, you can also boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

☐ I want to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ to: Scholarships for Street Kids. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

☐ I am happy to receive further information relating to the work of S4SK

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Please return to: Erica Cadbury, Treasurer, S4SK, 72 Sun Street, Haworth, Keighley, BD22 8AH
email: s4skfinance@gmail.com