



# SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STREET KIDS

**Report and Appeal - 2019**



**Working to provide educational opportunities  
for very poor children in Myanmar**

S4SK is a registered charity in the UK, No: 1131559  
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## Who we are:

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

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### In Myanmar, we are Hope for Shining Stars (H4SS)

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Some of our staff and teachers outside the Learning Centre in Hlegu

**Together, S4SK and H4SS work to bring real change to the lives of severely deprived children.**

**Beginnings:** This is the tenth year since the registration of S4SK as a UK charity in 2009, followed in 2016 by the registration of H4SS as a local NGO in Myanmar.

The actual work started earlier, in 2007, with two chance encounters between John McConnell (a British Quaker working with NGOs in Yangon at the time) and people begging or hawking. John explains:

**A mother and baby in the street:**

*“The first encounter was with a mother and baby, Tan Tan and Nwe Nwe, who were begging in the street. Leprosy had resulted in the loss of Tan Tan’s fingers and toes, but Nwe Nwe seemed healthy. After a sleepless night reflecting on their plight, I decided to do what I could to help them. With help from one of my students, I developed a rapport with the family. With the help of the Leprosy Mission, we arranged treatment for the leprosy. They brought a card of tablets along with a comic-style leaflet. However, Tan Tan could neither read the words, nor understand the drawings. It was at this point that I realised the extent of deprivation in this community. Here was someone who had never read a book, never read comics as a child, never drawn a picture. The family had likely been illiterate for generations and, with no education, they had no access to any of the benefits that society affords.*



Tan Tan and Nwe Nwe begging in Yangon in 2007



***Medical treatment, education, a house to call home were all things for other people in a different world. Hers was this dusty patch of road, the shelter of a tree when it rained, and not much else. The family was trapped in poverty and there was nothing Tan Tan could do to improve her situation. Begging paid for rice for the day and minimal shelter for the night, but that was about all.***



The bamboo house



Tan Tan and Nwe Nwe looking happy and relaxed in their own home



John with Nwe Nwe after Tan Tan died, and on the day we managed to get her into an orphanage

*One thing they surely needed was a place to stay and so, on a later work trip and with the help of an NGO driver, I bought a bamboo house across the river from Rangoon. It cost no more than a small garden shed in the UK.*

*Tan Tan and Nwe Nwe moved in along with a 'cousin' (I am not sure of the exact relationship) and her family, and an older auntie. I had bought a charcoal stove, mosquito nets, mats and cleaning equipment. Their possessions (that is for 4 adults and 3 children) occupied only 4 half-filled bin bags—all they had in the world.*

*They had ideas of keeping ducks and setting up a small shop to sell eggs and groceries, and I left money with the driver to help achieve this. There was hope for the future, and I have some lovely photos of Tan Tan and Nwe Nwe looking happy and relaxed in their own home—so different from how they often seemed on the street.*

*However, there was to be no happy ending. While I was in the UK, Tan Tan was diagnosed with a brain tumour and died shortly after.*

***She may have had symptoms for months but would not think to seek help. Why go to a doctor anyway if you know you will not be able to afford the treatment!***

*The money I had left to buy ducks*

and a stall was spent on treatment and ultimately, her funeral. When I returned to Myanmar I found Nwe Nwe to be in a terrible state. She was being rented out to other beggars (a baby in arms will always trigger compassion in passers-by and so is an asset), was floppy, had chronic diarrhoea, and seemed dangerously thin.

**Why did her carer not do something about it? I think that extreme poverty brings with it profound apathy. So many of the things that we take for granted are beyond reach when you have no money, so people get used to simply enduring whatever comes along.**

I was very concerned about Nwe Nwe's health, but did not know what, as a foreigner, I could do. Luckily, the director of the NGO I was working with had a sister, Alice, who had set up an NGO dedicated to early childhood development, and knew Myanmar well. Alice's opinion, on meeting Nwe Nwe, was that the baby was at risk of malnutrition, so we persuaded her carer to consider placing her in an orphanage that Alice had worked with: "It's the best one I know," she said. We hired a taxi and drove there that day. Seeing such healthy well-fed children, the carer made the noble decision to leave the baby there. Nwe Nwe has thrived there and is now a healthy 12 year-old."

**How can we bring change to the lives of families at such a low economic level, and whose values and aspirations are conditioned by generations of illiteracy and poverty? The second chance encounter provided the beginnings of an answer.**



Alice Mundhenk, founder of Yinthwei Foundation



Nwe Nwe being weighed at the Orphanage and some months later





Tan Dar

### **The postcard seller:**

*"One day, I was sitting in a cafe in the centre of Rangoon, writing notes for my next course. As I left, a girl of about 13, Tan Dar, tugged at my shirt sleeve in an attempt to sell me postcards. I was somewhat irritated and said: 'You should be in school'. The girl, who like many younger beggars had picked up some English, replied: 'Oh, I would like to go to school, but I earn the money for the family, and my mum is sick.'*

***Though just 13 years old, Tan Dar was already a breadwinner for her family. I asked how much she earned in a morning, then said: 'OK, if I can find a class for you to attend, and if I leave that amount of money for your mum with the teacher, would you go to class each day?'***

*We looked at each other for some moments, then she shouted, 'YES'.*

*We were both surprised. I managed to find a Christian mission school which was willing to run the class, paid for teaching time and room rent, and left money to be kept for their families. A further condition was that the school should not try to convert the children to Christianity: rather we would respect their faiths. The first class started with the postcard girl and her sister, both Buddhist, and a Muslim girl. The numbers soon rose to seven, then thirteen."*

**Combining education with social protection is still central to our work. However good the education we provide, if we ignore the poverty of families, we will not be able to reach these children.**



Negotiating terms for the first class



The class grew week by week

**S4SK and H4SS:** From the beginning, S4SK has tried to support families while providing education to their children. By 2013, S4SK had an active team in Myanmar and the demand for classes was getting beyond what we could fund, so we decided to establish an independent local NGO.

Registration eventually came through in 2016 and the new NGO called itself Hope for Shining Stars (H4SS). H4SS now has a strong Advisory Board and employs upwards of 40 teachers. S4SK is currently H4SS's largest funder, contributing just over one third of its income, with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Child Fund Myanmar making up the rest.

**How does poverty block access to education?** To appreciate the effect of poverty on children's education we need to put ourselves in the shoes of their families.

**Work:** There are many jobs where income is so low that children have to work to support family income—beggars, building site workers, farm labourers, scavengers, street hawkers, bean peelers etc. Hours are long. Often children work alongside their parents.



Children working full-time preventing them from accessing education

**A place to stay:** All our families are landless. They put up shacks on unused land, but have no papers and so are liable to be moved on without compensation. In many cases, the land is free because it is low-lying and so liable to flooding. Flood damage to homes is a regular problem for them.

**Food:** Rice is affordable but meat and eggs are expensive. Lack of education about nutrition results in some children getting a poor diet.

**Medical care:** While initial consultations with a doctor are sometimes free, treatment has to be paid for. If hospitalisation is necessary, both medicines and operations need to be paid for, pushing poor families into huge debt.

**Lifestyle:** With no education about lifestyle habits, many become addicted to drugs and alcohol. Cheaper locally distilled varieties are preferred resulting in many deaths. Tan Tan's husband died from alcohol poisoning.

**Finances:** Our families have neither bank accounts nor savings. A medical bill, or other emergency, can push a family deep into debt. Typical interest rates for poor people run at 20% to 25% per month—yes per month! Servicing long-term debt often forces families to keep their children in work.

**Education:** Like Tan Tan, most of our parents are illiterate, so have little idea of how education could benefit their children. Just as they had to work in childhood, so parents expect their children to do the same.

**Child labour:** That children are full-time breadwinners makes them unable to attend school, even when it is free. The families simply cannot afford the loss of the child's earnings incurred by regular school attendance. Thus, children miss the access to education that should provide the foundation for satisfying careers and full participation in society.

### **The S4SK-H4SS strategy:**

Our strategy evolved through years of experience in trying to provide quality education and support to severely deprived children and their families.

**Accessible education:** Non-formal education (NFE) classes provide enjoyable activity-based learning. Last year H4SS provided NFE to 543 children in 41 classes, 207 class places funded by S4SK.



**Family support (FS):** Families are compensated for loss of earnings while their children are in class. Last year, H4SS provided FS to 390 families, 188 of them funded by S4SK (in one class FS was provided by the local NFE committee).

**Parent education (PE):** There are monthly PE sessions where issues affecting children's health and education are discussed. Last year, H4SS provided PE to 527 families, 157 of them funded by S4SK.

**Social work:** Our teachers visit the homes to help resolve problems. Last year, H4SS visited 466 homes on average 3 times each, 159 of them funded by S4SK.



**Successive educational opportunities:** Income-generating activities are part of the NFE curriculum, followed by scholarships for vocational training or further study for alumni. Last year, H4SS provided scholarships at various levels to 336 students, 94 of them funded by S4SK.





**Teacher training and mentoring:** Teachers are specially trained and mentored to ensure that they provide quality education and support for children and families. **Last year H4SS trained and mentored 42 teachers (18 funded by S4SK) and 7 volunteers, and made 5 mentoring visits to each class.**

**Poverty alleviation:** With the support and guidance of Women for the World, we have introduced a savings scheme and rotating top-up loan designed to help families get out of debt. **So far 15 families in Hlegu are taking part in the scheme.**



**Advocacy:** We take every opportunity to advocate for broader provision of both education and social protection to this very poor section of society.

### **Non-formal education (NFE) classes:**

Last year, H4SS ran 41 NFE classes, set up in cooperation with local non-formal education committees (NFEC) whose members provide oversight and support. Here are some of them.



Class at Ywarbe Village near Pyay



Night-time class, Pakkokku



Htauk Kyant



Dagon Dine class, Hlegu



Thanat Pin, Bago



Indine class, Hlegu

## **Bridging the gap between non-formal and formal education:**

We sponsor NFE alumni to continue their education. The H4SS Learning Centre at Hlegu helps bridge the gap between non-formal education and colleges and vocational training centres which have a more formal approach.



Last year 29 students were accommodated at the learning Centre, 23 of whom attended E4Y. S4SK funds the entire cost of the Learning Centre as well as associated scholarships.

## **Activities at the Learning Centre include:**

- Sewing and tailoring classes;
- A daily NFE class with children bused in from around Hlegu;
- Accommodation for alumni of NFE classes who are undertaking further study at institutions in Yangon;
- A daily homework class to help ensure that students make the best of their study;
- Counselling to help children adjust from rural life to the demands of educational institutions in Yangon.

## **Putting it all together for a family in poverty:**

This is one of the families we help, in front of their home. At the centre is Kyi Kyi, a devoted mother. The boy second from the left is Pyo Wei. He and his younger sister Thei Thei (second from the right) have both been with us for some years.



The family used to live in Ayerwaddy Division before moving to Indine, near Hlegu. The father was out of work, alcoholic and would force the older children to steal and buy liquor for him. As a result Pyo Wei was often in trouble with the police. After one violent beating he and Thei Thei decided to run away. They were spotted, looking lost on the road, by a people-trafficker who tried to kidnap them. Luckily Pyo Wei managed to borrow a phone and called a neighbour who alerted the police in time.

**NFE class:** Pyo Wei joined our NFE class in Indine in 2013, aged 12. At first, the family lived under a tarpaulin, so H4SS built them a bamboo house close to our class. However, after some months, they sold the house and moved back to Ayerwaddy. On the day of their departure the children came to class and explained that they felt they were being cheated on account of their illiteracy, not getting fair wages, ***“for our work digging the soil”***. However, the move did not work out. The family returned and the children were back in class a month or two later.

**Child labour:** At that time Pyo Wei worked from morning till night catching fish and crabs in the marshy area near his home. In the evenings he would watch TV at a neighbour’s house, then catch frogs on the way home. Reaching into the mud to seize crabs and frogs could be dangerous as snakes had nests there too:

***“My mum would buy rice, vegetables, salt and oil, and we would eat the fish I caught.”***

Kyi Kyi would sell the larger fish and crabs in the market, and get what work she could, as a labourer. Money was tight.

The NFE class was 3 hours per day in the morning for which H4SS compensates each family at 500/- Kyat (27p) per day. Kyi Kyi attended a parent education session each month to learn about nutrition, family budgeting, hygiene etc., and collect around 10,000/- Kyat (£5.50) for Pyo Wei’s full attendance—a reliable income stream which let her keep him in class.

***“After attending class I learned to read. I was so happy to be in the class. I had never***



Pyo Wei shortly after he joined our class in 2013 aged 12



Pyo Wei fishing in the area near his home



Pyo Wei 3rd from left in the front row of the class in 2015



During a class at the Learning Centre in 2017



Following a course in excavator driving at a training centre in 2019



Pyo Wei confidently explaining the operation of a backhoe excavator in 2019

*studied before. Now I enjoy reading. My mum said, 'Please keep on with your study'. Some parents cannot send their children to school, but my mum sent me!"*

**Successive opportunities:** Interviewed in 2018, Pyo Wei said:

*"Now I want to be a mechanic. Firstly, I want to go to E4Y vocational training college, and after that I will choose a job I want."*

E4Y is a Swiss-funded pre-vocational college which offers quality education. We have 23 of our alumni studying there this year. However, Pyo Wei failed the entrance exam, which was a big disappointment for him.

Mindful of his interests we found a training course in excavator control, which he started this year. This too was not without problems as he got dengue fever at the beginning of his second work placement. After some time in hospital (supported by H4SS-S4SK) he is back continuing with the course.

We asked him to explain the controls of the back-hoe to us and it was heart-warming to see his enthusiasm and confidence in demonstrating both the operation and the safety measures that need to be adhered to.

***Our teacher said we should treat the lock-bar like our wife - never forget it ... If I pull the right lever the arm stretches out. And if I pull both levers, the bucket moves like this.***

Meanwhile Thei Thei is now living at our Learning Centre, following a sewing and tailoring course and experimenting with dress design.

**Poverty alleviation:** The reality of poverty is still there, however. As a result of irregular availability of work in 2018, Kyi Kyi incurred a

debt of 200,000/- Kyat (£110) to a money-lender. With interest at 20% per month, her current income is never able to pay more than the interest, so the debt is perpetuated. Being innumerate, she has to rely on the calculations of the moneylender.

**Debt is a common problem among our families, and a major factor in keeping children in work.**

In the past, when we tried to relieve families of debt, they quickly got into debt again. This year H4SS has teamed up with a local NGO called Women for the World (WfW) to run a savings scheme. Families save together and decide who should receive low-interest loans. H4SS will top this up with a rotating loan which will allow them to buy off the debt completely, and repay the principal in a manageable way.

**Kyi Kyi is already saving, and should be able to get out of debt this year. Having developed good habits of saving and budgeting, and with the support of the savings group, we hope that she will avoid getting into debt in the future.**



Thei Thei with a dress she designed and made herself



Pyo We and Kyi Kyi visiting the Women for the World centre



First deposits being made

## Messages from H4SS Director and Advisory Board (AB):



### **Daw Aye Aye Thinn (Programme Director):**

“The problems of our children come from poverty. Therefore, we are introducing a saving system to the NFE families. I hope the Poverty Alleviation Project will be expanded to all the parents in future. With regard to NFE, to include different areas of learning, an integrated curriculum is being developed. The feedback from teachers has been very positive. One commented that, ‘**the community people wanted to know what the content of NFE class was because the children asked them many questions**’. The children have become more curious about their environment, communicate easier (even with adults), and are happy to learn through their daily life.”



### **Daw Khin Toe (ret. Assistant Director of Education):**

“Out of school children in Myanmar have insufficient food, dress and no safe-shelter. The worst thing is they are illiterates. S4SK has been supporting those children with kindness and wisdom to gain better lives for 10 years. On behalf of the Advisory Board, I really appreciate and would like to thank Po Po John and S4SK.”



### **U Nyunt Shwe (ret. Deputy Director of Education, Ministry of Basic Education):**

“For Shining Stars we should share the value the life, forgive where necessary, be active, work cooperatively, help them to save money, and live in a way conducive to good health, happiness and contentment.”



### **U Maung Myint (ret. Director of Social Welfare):**

“Hope for Shining Stars (H4SS) was founded by S4SK. Thanks much for everything. I wish that S4SK will continue to develop and succeed for many years to come.”

## Dear Friend and Supporter,

As you can see, from small beginnings, H4SS has grown to the point where we are bringing real change to the lives of around 860 children and young people this year. The strategy of providing support to families alongside education really does work.

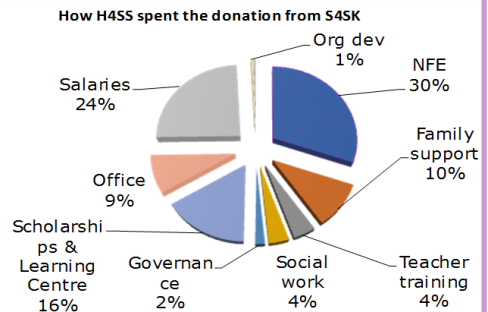
S4SK is a small charity. Apart from the costs of our appeal, all admin costs at S4SK, including travel, are covered by donation from the trustees, so you can be sure that nearly everything (roughly 98%) of your donation will go to the work you see here. Please help us to bring hope to the lives of disadvantaged children.

In friendship,



John McConnell (Managing Trustee, S4SK)

In 2018-9, S4SK raised £52,924 from trusts, individuals and Quaker meetings. The sum of £63,058 was spent on the work you see here, and £1,096 on fundraising and appeals. To guarantee **continuity of classes from year to year we retain 10 months operating costs in reserve** (£54,536 on 01.04.2019). Designated expenditure for 2019-20 is currently £60,000. Full accounts are available on the Charity Commission website, or from the treasurer.



## 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**