



## HOW PEOPLE IN NEED HELPS IN BURMA

Funds from the Club of Friends enable People in Need to help people persecuted by the brutal military regime in Burma.

### Help for families of political prisoners and persecuted activists

Since 2004 we have been making small cash donations to **more than 220 families** of political prisoners and persecuted activists in Burma. The donations are given to the families by messengers through our partner organisation, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), which was founded by former Burmese political prisoners. The modest cash donations are not merely moral support but also a significant contribution in the situation when the breadwinner is imprisoned. The money enables them to buy food and medicines for their imprisoned relatives. They often use the money to pay travelling expenses because many political prisoners have been moved to prisons distant hundreds of kilometres from their home. *"When I was first imprisoned in the seventies it was much more hopeless than today. The world took no interest in us at all. Today I want to thank your people and your organisation, your assistance means a lot to us,"* said Khun Sai, who was imprisoned three times for opposition activity in Burma and finally fled to Thailand.

### Aid for the undercover reporters

Thanks to Club of Friends we have been supporting financially the exile media, Democratic Voice of Burma and Mizzima News. Both use our donations in support of a network of reporters operating in Burma in secrecy. These extremely brave young people document the real situation in the country and send their articles, photos and television footage out into the world. We are also in contact with individual independent journalists in Burma and we provide them with information about what is going on in the world and journalists manuals and we run for them short journalistic courses.

*"I will teach my younger colleagues how to film violations of human rights. And I want to make a documentary about opposition groups that fight for democracy in Burma,"* said one of the secret reporters we had trained to shoot and edit footage.

### Aid for civic initiatives

We also provide financial aid to small civic groups that cannot be registered for political reasons as non-governmental organisations but run small-scale educational, social, healthcare, and political projects. A case in point is a group providing medical care to HIV positive persons, independent journalists teaching their junior colleagues the rudiments of

journalism, and a group that trains monastery school teachers how to teach.

### A story of aid: From a trainee to a political prisoner

He spent three months in our country in 2007. As a trainee with the People in Need this twenty-five year old Burmese activist studied Czech transformation and the work of non-governmental organisations. When he returned to Burma he became leader of an opposition organisation of young people. In spring 2008 he and his friends took part in a campaign appealing to the Burmese to vote in a referendum against the undemocratic constitution drafted by the government. They secretly wrote the slogan "Vote No" on walls and signs. On the day of the referendum they watched at polling stations how the results were falsified. The next day they were arrested. From this former trainee we later received a letter smuggled from prison: "The life of a prisoner is a life without any human rights. I no longer miss Czech beer. The only thing I miss is freedom. Great freedom!" He was sentenced to thirty-seven years for writing slogans. We don't publish his name lest we harm him. His family was among those that received aid from Club of Friends in 2008.

**People in Need** (Člověk v tísni, o. p. s.)

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