

THE NEW HOPE MYANMAR ORPHANAGE



The New Hope for Myanmar Orphanage is a project I personally support in Burma (Myanmar), along with my colleagues from the Rotary Club of Essendon.

It is run by a fairly young Christian husband and wife - Run and Grace. They have two children who are completely "integrated" with the other kids in residence.

Run and Grace (and all the children) are from the Chin State in Burma. Close to the Indian border, the Chin State is kind of the land that God forgot because I understand there is no arable land, just inhospitable rock. There are no decent roads, nor much in the way of electricity, running water etc. It is so poor that, paradoxically, the other Burmese (poor though they are as well) generally feel sorry for the Chin people.

Run and Grace had the idea of moving to Yangon and taking with them as many deserving children as they could, to give them a better life. The "better life" is basic housing, a meal each day, and school. They rent a property in a semi rural place on the outskirts of Yangon.

The number of children ranges between about 28 and 35, and the ages range from 5 to 16 years. While some of the children are orphans in the traditional sense, others are "economic" orphans where one or both parents are "out of action", for a variety of reasons: prostitution, drugs, jail, illness are among them.

The children are incredibly healthy and happy, and a credit to Run and Grace.

We visit each year and assist them with food (rice and cooking oil), and one or two "bigger ticket" items. This year for example, we gave them a power transformer which cost \$500, and a motor bike which cost the same amount. The latter enables Run to shop for food in the nearby village without having to walk for miles. Last year we gave them a water pump.

We also take with us lots of treats for the kids: things like poppa box drinks, cakes, biscuits, soap, toothpaste etc., and of course small toys, hats, clothing - anything we can get our hands on really. Aside from this occasion, they simply do not get treats - EVER!. One meal a day is all that can be managed within the limited budget.

When we were there last year, quite by accident as we were leaving, we heard a "whirring" noise and it turned out to be one of the older girls out on a "verandah" sewing on a very old machine. It transpired they were beginning a "cottage industry" making quilts. They had a stock of 10, and we bought them all for \$10 each. We brought them home and sold them for \$15 each, and took the extra \$50 back with us this year. As it happened we had with us (back in Yangon), two sewing machines and some fabric which we had obtained here and intended to give to another project however we had been unsuccessful in contacting the administrators of that project so, we made a snap decision to give the machines to Run and Grace. They were delighted.



So, fast forward to this year. Knowing from Grace that the sewing project continues, we made a point of taking another sewing machine, and many many kilos of fabric, and other sewing items.

When we arrived, there was a line-up of machines - about 6 in all, and the girls are now making their quilts - really just pram covers, or small cot covers, pillow slips and cotton pants (these are a bit like "surfie" shorts and are worn by young boys).

To say they were delighted with our gifts, would be the understatement of the year. Grace began to cry, and continued to do so until we left.

Of course the bags of goodies came from so many wonderfully kind women, only too happy to clear out their sewing cupboard for such a good cause. I wish each and every one of them could have seen the joy on the faces of Grace and the girls, as they rummaged through the many bags of goodies, and on behalf of them I say a heartfelt thank you.

I think they could really do with a lesson or two! But in the absence of that I am more than happy to be the place you send any unwanted sewing items which I will deliver when I return to Yangon in November, and again in March.

So, this year we purchased 25 quilts from the Orphanage – their entire stock (I imagine they ensured there were plenty on hand!), for \$250. We bought them home, and have donated them all to the very worthy Caroline Chisholm Society here in Moonee Ponds. CCS provides support for needy mothers and babies, and is a wonderful local community project which the Rotary Club of Essendon also supports. So, not only have our donors supported needy children in Burma, but in doing so have indirectly (but in a really meaningful way) supported a worthy local charity as well

Meantime, there are some pictures with this - not too many good ones I am afraid, as the lighting and cramped surroundings made photography very difficult.

With grateful thanks.

Anne Rogers





