



Thabyay  
Education  
Network

Building civil society in Myanmar through higher education



# Arohana

SCHOLARSHIPS SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

## Educating individuals, transforming communities

The Arohana Scholarship Fund (Arohana) was established by Thabyay Education Network (Thabyay) in 2009. Thabyay is a non-profit foundation registered in Thailand working to develop communities and civil society in Myanmar (Burma) through facilitating access to quality higher education. For more information about Thabyay, visit the website [www.thabyay.org](http://www.thabyay.org).



Arohana provides scholarship funds to support talented and committed individuals from disadvantaged and marginalized communities in Myanmar to study at international universities in Asia. Through this support, Arohana seeks to equip these individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge and networks to promote grassroots sustainable development and the growth of civil society in their communities.

Arohana focuses on supporting students to study subjects directly relevant to immediate development needs in Myanmar. These include health, education, community development, social science, environment, peace and reconciliation, media studies and law. All scholars are expected to return to their communities after graduation.



Since 1996, Thabyay has administered scholarship funds on behalf of institutional donors for over 700 Myanmar students. With the establishment of Arohana, Thabyay wishes to reach out to a much wider population of donors interested in supporting progress in Myanmar through higher education.

## Why support scholarships?

Myanmar has been mired in protracted social, political and economic crises for two generations. Livelihoods, civil society and the welfare state have been decimated, leaving an estimated 50% of the population living in extreme poverty. The country is desperately in need of skilled individuals able to lead reconciliation, and implement effective measures to promote a more just, equitable, prosperous and democratic society.

One individual in Myanmar equipped with the right skills can have a profound and long-lasting impact. Graduates from Thabyay's scholarship programs have gone on to become key figures in the development of their communities, starting schools, health programs, youth centers, and leading a host of initiatives to improve the lives and opportunities of thousands of their fellow community members and wider society.



Such initiatives are developed directly in response to the community's needs, on the community's own terms, and led by the community themselves. It is development from the bottom up, rather than the top down.

Returning graduates transfer their skills to the community, and inspire others to make a difference. Consequently, their impact can endure and expand well beyond their personal involvement.

Therefore, through supporting a single individual, you can improve the lives of countless others. As the saying goes, a single flame can light a thousand candles.



## Quote

*"Providing skills and social awareness through education is an investment not just in individuals, but in a generation of citizens who will work to improve their nation, regardless of the state of government."*

Kyaw Kyaw, Scholarship Alumni

## How Arohana works

The Arohana Scholarship Fund is a fully integrated program of Thabyay Education Network. Thabyay provides a range of key services to support Arohana:

- A **waiting list** of hundreds of outstanding university scholarship applicants sourced through the other scholarship programs administered by Thabyay. This means that Arohana does not need to launch separate application processes, thus significantly reducing the costs of operating the scholarship program.
- **University preparation** services to help applicants acquire the academic skills and qualifications required to access and succeed at international universities in Asia.
- Access to **fee waivers** negotiated with university partners throughout Asia.



- An **extensive network** throughout Myanmar to disseminate information about scholarship opportunities.
- **Academic counseling and support** services for applicants and current students.
- **Alumni support** services to help graduates optimize their impact on return to their communities.

Over time, Arohana accumulates donations to the Scholarship Fund. Once sufficient funds are available, Arohana awards a scholarship for one year of study to a selected applicant on Thabyay's waiting list. Arohana's award may not cover the entire cost of study as the candidate may have partial funds from another scholarship program, from their own savings, or from family and friends.

## The selection process

Thabyay has an extensive waiting list of outstanding candidates sourced through the various scholarship programs that it administers on behalf of institutional donors. This waiting list is used to select candidates for Arohana scholarships. Selection of candidates is done via committees established by Thabyay. Committee members can include Thabyay staff and external individuals. The committees follow strict procedures to ensure that selection is fully impartial.

Thabyay selects candidates for Arohana scholarships on the following criteria (not in order of priority):

- Demonstrated track record in, and commitment to, working for the benefit of their community.
- Demonstrated intention to return to Myanmar after graduation.
- Potential to make a positive impact on their return to Myanmar.
- Relevance of their chosen course of study to immediate development needs in Myanmar.
- Perceived quality of the program of studies and university that the applicant has chosen.
- Academic proficiency and potential.
- A representative balance of gender and ethnicity.
- A representative balance of relevant academic disciplines and skills.
- Financial need.
- Stage of study (new student or continuing student), Bachelors, Masters, PhD.
- Cost of study.



## Obligations of scholarship recipients

All students receiving scholarship awards through Arohana are required to sign Grant Letters which require them to fulfill certain core obligations including:

- Meeting university minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements.
- Meeting university minimum attendance requirements.
- Using their scholarship award only for study-related costs.
- Reporting to Arohana.
- Attending Thabyay's annual Student Conference.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Arohana regularly monitors students' progress to make sure that they have settled in well at university and are getting the most out of their studies. As well as providing them with orientation on their arrival at university, Arohana visits the students at least once per year and remains in regular contact by email and phone. Furthermore, students are required to submit an annual report to Arohana summarizing their activities and achievements during the academic year.

Students are required as part of their scholarship contract to reach minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) and attendance levels established by their university. Students who do not reach these minimum requirements do not receive further awards from Arohana unless there are extenuating circumstances that explain the situation. Students who meet these requirements but are clearly not performing satisfactorily are interviewed by Arohana to assess the reasons for their under-performance, and to agree steps to remedy the situation. Such candidates are carefully reviewed if they apply for repeat funding to continue their studies.

Arohana surveys students on an annual basis to canvass their opinions on their university experience. If Arohana receives well-founded and consistently negative feedback about a particular course of study, staff will contact the university to advocate for improvements and, if these are not forthcoming within a reasonable timeframe, will cease to recommend or support applications for that course of study. Similarly, courses that receive consistently good feedback from students will be prioritized in Arohana's recommendations to students.



## Focus on universities in Asia

Arohana prioritizes awarding scholarships for study at Asian universities for the following reasons:

- Course content tends to be more relevant to the Myanmar/Asian context.
- Students can build networks with fellow students in the Asian region which they can draw on in the future.
- Course fees and the cost of living tend to be considerably less expensive than at 'Western' universities meaning that Arohana can support many more individuals to study with available funds.
- Arohana has access to fee waivers negotiated with Asian university partners by Thabyay. These savings offer even better value for money.
- Arohana can monitor and evaluate the quality of university programs in Asia more effectively.
- Arohana can respond more effectively to student needs when they are based in the regions, and visit them on occasion to check that they are doing well.
- Students are less disconnected from their home country during their studies and therefore more likely to return to Myanmar on graduation.
- Arohana can link students into Thabyay's network of Myanmar scholars in Asia, and have them attend the annual Student's Conference.



## How much does it cost to study?

Arohana calculates the average cost of study for one year's study at university in Asia to be approximately US\$6,500. However, the cost varies considerably depending on the following factors:

- Location of study (for instance, tuition and living costs are much higher in Hong Kong than in Thailand).
- Type of program (Masters tend to be more expensive than Bachelors over a single year).
- The fee waiver agreements negotiated with a particular university.
- The length of study required by the program.
- Other variable costs such as transport, visas, etc.

Arohana scholarship awards also vary depending on the individual circumstances of each scholar. Some may have funds from another source such as another scholarship program, some may receive support for living costs from their university and so require only a small top-up fund. Each case is different.



## Scholarship applicant profiles

Presented below are the profiles of five scholarship applicants from the hundreds currently on Thabyay's scholarship waiting list.



Name:	Zun Moe
Age:	26
Ethnicity:	Myanmar
Area of Study:	Health Social Science
Level of Study:	MA
Country of Study:	Thailand
Amount Requested (1year):	US\$7,500

### Brief overview of candidate

Zun Moe was born in Dawei in the South of Myanmar into an educated but not wealthy family. Winning five distinctions in her high school examinations she went on to study for a Bachelor's degree in Medicine in Myanmar. On graduation in 2006 she began practicing as a doctor, while also volunteering in the health programs of local humanitarian organizations.

In May 2008, when Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwaddy Delta of Myanmar, Zun Moe joined a local health organization as a regional health leader and psychosocial support person.

Zun Moe is interested in the control of communicable diseases, and HIV/AIDS in particular. Myanmar is currently facing an HIV/AIDS epidemic with infection rates estimated to be between 1.3 – 2.6% of the population. Zun Moe would like to study Health Social Science in order to gain the knowledge and skills to carry out research into the effectiveness of current responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

### In her own words:

“Despite efforts to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS in Myanmar, there has not been a significant reduction in prevalence. I have a plan to research the effectiveness of the targeted condom promotion program (TCP) in Myanmar. I would like to study high risk groups in townships in Myanmar where TCP has been implemented. Using valid and culturally sensitive research methodology, I would like to analyze the impact of the TCP program among these populations, and identify possible improvements.”





Name:	Tun Oo
Age:	24
Ethnicity:	Pa'O
Area of Study:	Teaching English as a Second Language
Level of Study:	MA
Country of Study:	Thailand
Amount Requested (1year):	US\$7,000

### Brief overview of candidate

Tun Oo was born in a large town in Shan State, Myanmar. While neither of his parents had the opportunity to graduate from high school, they were acutely aware of the value of education and pushed their children to be academically ambitious. When he reached middle school level, his parents could no longer afford the school fees.

To ensure that he could continue his education, they sent him to a monastery in another region of Myanmar where he could live for free and continue his education. Despite having little time to study due to monastery duties, Tun Oo managed to graduate high school with one distinction.

So, his parents' persistence paid off, and Tun Oo attended university in Myanmar, graduating in 2008 with a Bachelors degree in Economics. Throughout university, Tun Oo supported himself by working as a home tutor for high school students. He also volunteered as an English language teacher at a local NGO working to help young people improve their skills, and he continues to work there today.

### In his own words:

"I would like to obtain a Master's degree in English teaching with the eventual goal of starting my own language institute in my region. This region is economically and academically disadvantaged, so as a teacher I can make a difference by helping young people. I can counsel them, inspire them, give them the skills and confidence to achieve their ambitions and improve their community. I also want to give them a sense of hope that, with perseverance, they can become great role models for other young people."





Name:	Thandar Lwin
Age:	32
Ethnicity:	Kayaw
Area of Study:	Gender and Development Studies
Level of Study:	MA
Country of Study:	Thailand
Amount Requested (1 year):	US\$7,500

### Brief overview of candidate

Thandar Lwin was born into a big family in Kayah State in Myanmar. When she was eleven, her father died, leaving the family very poor. Her mother could only just afford to feed the family, and was often unable to pay for schooling costs. On completion of high school, she studied for a BA in History by distance as she could not afford to attend full-time education.

Since 2001, Thandar Lwin has worked for a number of local and international development organizations in Kayah State. These experiences helped her to understand the range of political, economic, and social issues affecting marginalized people in her community, and the potential of development work to begin to address some of these problems.

Thandar Lwin is particularly interested in gender issues. In her work, she has noticed significant areas of gender inequality in her community, and how this negatively affects development. She would like to undertake a Master's degree in gender and development in order to strengthen her theoretical understanding of this field so that she can return to Myanmar and implement practical ways to promote gender equality in her community.

### In her own words:

“If I am able to gain better skills and knowledge in this field, I will be able to work more effectively in community development. I can raise awareness about gender issues in my community at the grass roots. I will train people, develop a manual on gender issues, and encourage the development of community groups focused on promoting gender equality.”





Name:	Soe Shwe
Age:	22
Ethnicity:	Chinese
Area of Study:	Social Work
Level of Study:	BSc
Country of Study:	Hong Kong
Amount Requested (1year):	US\$5,500

### Brief overview of candidate

Soe Shwe was born in a town in the far South of Myanmar. When he was one year old, the family home burned down and the family moved to the then capital, Yangon, to make their living. Soe Shwe's parents worked as hawkers, making just enough to feed and clothe their children, and send them to school.

Soe Shwe graduated from high school and studied for a BA degree in English via distance education in Myanmar, supporting himself by working as a translator for private companies. On graduation, he began to work as an English teacher, doing paid tuition, and as a volunteer supporting students preparing for exams.

In 2008, he joined an international NGO as a translator, working within the organization's Child Protection program. This work exposed him to concepts of social work and child rights which he had never encountered before, and inspired him to want to develop his skills in this area. Soe Shwe wants to use the skills and knowledge that he could gain from studying Social Work to develop programs to protect street children in Myanmar from exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

### In his own words:

“Due to the high levels of poverty, there are many street children in Yangon. These children often lack basic necessities such as water, sanitation, food security, health care, education, protection and social services. They are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and arrest. Seeing this, I began to think how I could make a difference for these children. I would like to work to evaluate the needs of these children, develop effective solutions, and advocate for better social policies to protect them. My ultimate dream is to make these changes.”





Name:	Yin Htwe
Age:	25
Ethnicity:	Karen
Area of Study:	International Journalism
Level of Study:	BSc
Country of Study:	Hong Kong
Amount Requested (1year):	US\$1,500

### Brief overview of candidate

Yin Htwe was her parents' first child. Her father wanted a son, and she felt that she had defied his wishes simply by being born. On graduating from high school, she attempted to make up for this perceived disappointment by consenting to her parents' wishes that she study engineering at university, even though she wanted to study languages.

Having graduated in 2007, Yin Htwe resisted pressure to become an engineer and instead applied for a job with a newspaper as a trainee reporter. She was surprised to be offered a job. After a couple of years learning the ropes she was promoted to deputy editor of one of the newspaper's sections. Her job included writing stories, mentoring new reporters, assigning stories and editing them. Then, in 2009 she was promoted again to section editor, taking on layout and page design as part of her responsibilities.

During her career, Yin Htwe has become aware of the fundamental need for good journalism in Myanmar as part of the development of civil society, but also the shortcomings of the present journalistic environment. She would like to study for a BSc in International Journalism in order to develop her core journalistic skills. She intends to use these skills to support the development of a future generation of journalists in Myanmar who can transform the discipline.

### In her own words:

"In Myanmar, journalists often become frustrated because of censorship and leave the profession. Also, newspapers often fail to cover the information that the public need. As a result, journalism has lost much of its reputation. I would like to help to change this situation by encouraging and training young journalists to do their jobs well. I want to learn more about good journalism so that I can maintain my integrity, deal with difficult ethical issues, and provide accurate and balanced information to the public."



## How you can help

The Arohana Scholarship Fund urgently needs your help to raise funds to support scholarships.

### 1. Donate



globalgiving

The Arohana Scholarship Program is a registered project submitted by Thabyay Education Network on the GlobalGiving.org website. Donations via GlobalGiving can qualify for tax relief for US and, in some cases, Canadian taxpayers (see the GlobalGiving website for details).

Please visit the following link to make a donation:

<http://globalgiving.org/projects/university-scholarships-for-students-from-burma>

All donations are VERY welcome, small or large. Funds received via GlobalGiving will be wholly used to support scholarship awards for students from Burma, excepting an administrative fee levied by GlobalGiving when funds are transferred to Thabyay. GlobalGiving accepts major credit cards, Paypal and cheques.

Thank you for your support! If you have any questions, please contact us at [development@thabyay.org](mailto:development@thabyay.org).

### Quote

"The chance to study at university was a turning point in my life. It has given me the skills and confidence to stand up and make a difference. I will work to alleviate the suffering of my fellow citizens, and build a better future for Myanmar."

Soe Lay, Scholarship Alumni



## 2. Fundraise

We are keen to hear from anyone who would be interested to support us in our fundraising efforts. We need local advocates to spread the word and organize fundraising events on our behalf. If you would be interested to support us in this way, please contact us:

Email: [development@thabyay.org](mailto:development@thabyay.org)

Websites: [www.arohanascholarships.org](http://www.arohanascholarships.org)  
[www.thabyay.org](http://www.thabyay.org)

Thabyay Education Network is a registered non-profit foundation in Thailand.

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THAILAND



**a single**

**flame**

**can light**

**a thousand**

**candles**