



ကယ်ကယ် | Gyaw Gyaw

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Photo: Line Ramstad

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INTRODUCTION



Gyaw Gyaw 2015: From top left: Peter, Paw Eh Wah, Ste Pha, Ole. Row II: Phillipa, Saw Dee, Pah Me, See Da Pah. Row III: Kee Kee Pah, Line/Nee Ga Mwee, P'Enge, Mr. Brown.

Dear all friends of Gyaw Gyaw.

First of all we would like to thank everybody who has supported us through 2015. We could not have done this without the moral and financial support of all of you. Thank you very much.

Encouraging words from partners, friends and collaborators, both on the border, in Norway, and in the international architectural community, have made 2015 a great year for Gyaw Gyaw.

We always seek a gentle confined approach, slowly building sustainable community buildings together with the local communities where we live and work. The best tools for success. Along the way we try to bring small steps of development, empowerment and democracy, lifting up and listening to local voices. We are proud of our “Gyaw Gyaw way”

2015 was the year we finally completed the biggest project in the history of our small organization. The start of the school year, in June 2015, marked as a milestone for the Kler Deh High School Campus. The planning of the project started in the fall of 2013, and we spent most of 2014 having community meetings, designing and constructing the campus before completing it the first half of 2015. The students are almost done with their first school year, and we hope and believe the school will be an educational lodestar for other schools in Karen State in the coming years.

Towards the end of 2015, the project was also nominated for the prestigious Terra Awards, a world-wide prize for contemporary earthen architecture.

You can read more about the Kler Deh High School, the Terra Awards, and the other Gyaw Gyaw projects in this annual report. Enjoy.

On behalf of Gyaw Gyaw, Ole & Line

PROJECTS AND NUMBERS

- All amounts are indicated in Norwegian Kroner. (NOK)
Average conversion rate for 2015 was 418 THB/ 100 NOK.
- Actual project costs may vary due to currency exchange rate fluctuation.
- For 2015 budget exchange rate at 31.12.2015.
The conversion rate at the time was 407 THB/ 100 NOK

Kler Deh High School phase II

In 2014 we finished the first phase of the project, with three classrooms, toilets, showers and two dormitories. 2015 started we were left of 2014, by building two more identical dormitories with living space for 18 students in each, toilets and showers and a kitchen. We also completed phase II of the school with another three classrooms.

The school opened in June last year, with 25 students for the first school year. Even though the schools capacity is 80-90 students, we are not concerned about the apparent numbers. The Border Consortium, the organization responsible for food and shelters within the local refugee camps, estimates an annual decrease in camp population of 10-15 %. A good education system in the region is of vital importance for any resettlement. As one of the very few high schools in the region outside of the camps, Kler Deh High school will provide an opportunity for youth looking to further their education in their home country.

The school is run by Karen Education Department (KED). Due to financial constraints in the budgets of KED, the schools food budget is minimal, but teachers and students have set up a vegetable garden, making the school self-sufficient for the most common vegetables in the Karen kitchen. Such examples of good collaboration between students, teachers and KED, taking responsibility and finding good solutions together, makes us proud and confident that the project is in good hands.

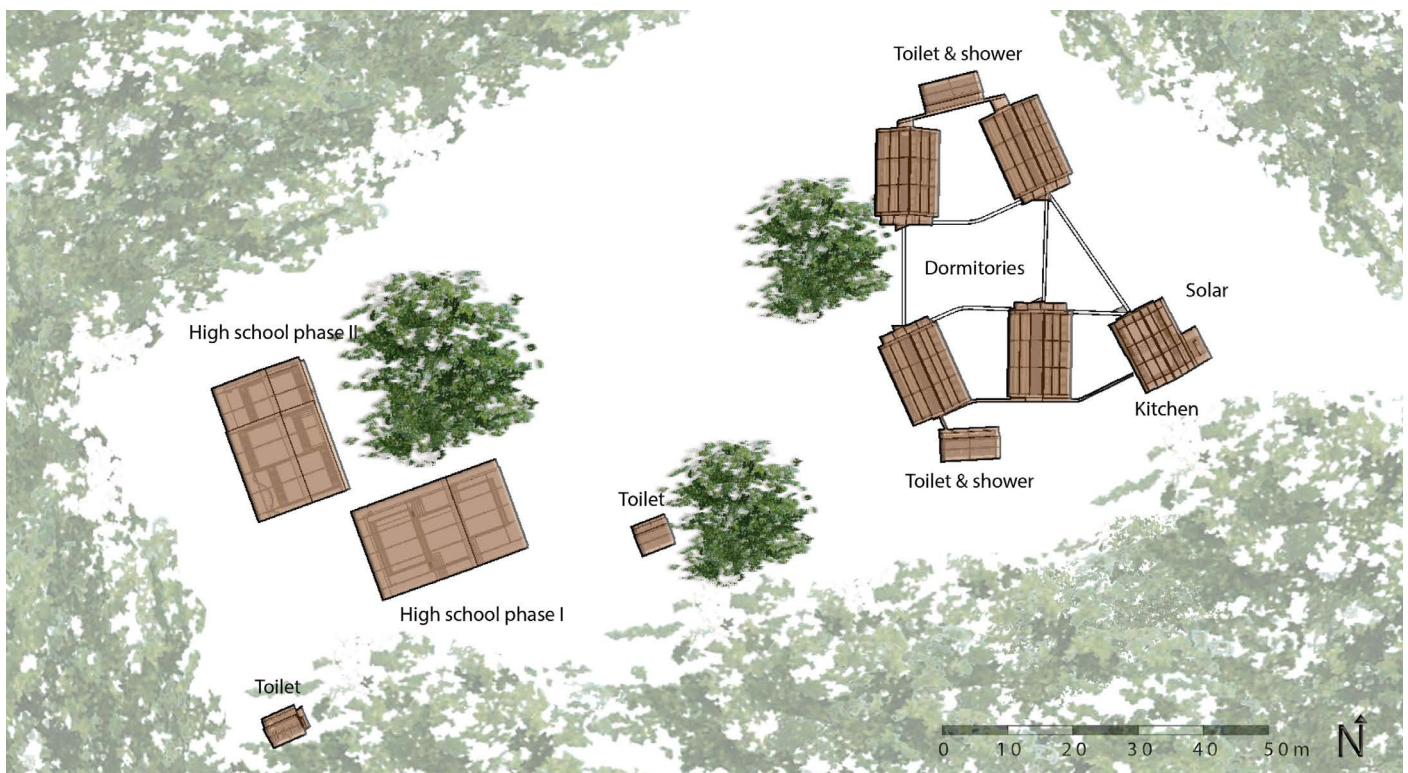




Photo: Line Ramstad

Kler Deh High School: classrooms



Photo: Line Ramstad

Kler Deh High School: dormitory interior

Kler Deh High School phase II - Dormitories



<i>Project budget:</i>	128.367,- NOK
<i>Project costs:</i>	93.565,-,- NOK*
<i>Size:</i>	340 square meters / 4 dormitories/18 students in each.
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Agora Architects /redesigned and implemented by Gyaw Gyaw**
<i>Materials:</i>	Bamboo, timber, insulated tin roof.
<i>Project start:</i>	November 2014
<i>Project finished:</i>	February 2015

* Amount spent in 2015. 142.364,- NOK was spent in 2014. Total project cost: 235 929,- NOK. We exceeded the budget because we decided to improve the partitions between each room with timber/bamboo walls. It was repeated for all the rooms in all the dormitories and is the reason for the higher cost.

** The dormitory design was originally built as temporary dormitories with Agora Architects in MTC Training Center in 2012. We adjusted and developed the design based on feedback from users to make it more functional, robust, and long lasting.

The four dormitories are facing each other, creating a common social space in between them. Teachers and students have fenced off part of it and developed a vegetable garden, well protected for the numerous goats and cows grazing in the area. A great contribution for a better diet within a limited budget.

The design is inspired by the temporary dormitories we built together with Agora Architects at Mae Tae Clinic in Mae Sot in 2012. Based on feedbacks from the first dormitories and for a long lasting result, we have adjusted the design. We have lifted the construction for better air flow and indoor space, and used durable materials for roof and floor for a permanent result.

Feedback from the students is great. They are in general very happy with the buildings, and the small issues found during the first months of use have been adjusted after completion to further enhance the living and learning environment at the campus.

Kler Deh High School phase II - High School



Photo: Line Ramstad

<i>Project budget:</i>	145 180,- NOK
<i>Project costs:</i>	135 837,- NOK
<i>Size:</i>	200 square meters. 3 classrooms / 48 square meters each
<i>Materials:</i>	Load-bearing adobe walls on concrete foundation. Insulated tin roof. Timberframed doors and windows with traditional bamboo plaiting.
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Gyaw Gyaw
<i>Project start:</i>	March 2015
<i>Project finished:</i>	July 2015

Together with phase I, the new school building is creating an L-shaped area, a common entrance zone for morning attendance and social hangouts. It's sloping downwards through the terrain towards the river a few hundred meters away, but built as a wall towards the main wind and rain direction to create sheltered and roofed hangout spaces for the students in as well rainy- as hot season.

Where phase I was built along the declining landscape, phase II is to a bigger extent built parallel to it, but adjusted for a minimal encroachment in the slope.

It is turned 90 degrees on the first building. It is based on the same principles as phase I; load-bearing adobe walls on a reinforced concrete slab and insulated tin roof on top of a timber construction. The design is adjusted to the landscape, sun and wind/rain direction, and the windows are made of plaited bamboo, with a small adjustment to the current local craftsman's knowledge.

The end walls are without windows for the teachers to have a full adobe wall for blackboard and other teaching equipment needed.



<i>Project budget:</i>	30 000,- NOK
<i>Project costs:</i>	33 337,- NOK
<i>Size:</i>	85 square meters.
<i>Materials:</i>	Partly traditional timber construction with bamboo sheets and partly load-bearing adobe walls on concrete foundation. Insulated tin roof.
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Gyaw Gyaw
<i>Project start:</i>	February 2015
<i>Project finished:</i>	April 2015

As most of the students at the school are boarding students, it is important with good, hygienic and functional eating facilities. A small kitchen and dining room was designed and built as part of the campus, in close proximity to the dormitories.

It's a combination of traditional local timber construction for the eating room and load-bearing adobe walls for the kitchen. The result is an open room solution with a concrete floor, divided by levels, combined with stairs the width of the room, following the landscape both on the inside and the outside of the building. Water and cooking facilities are placed outside and covered by a roof. Water is naturally drained into a banana planted area before it is absorbed by the jungle. Banana palms works as natural pose to handle grey water in the area. The eating room is built with half wall burned bricks for rain protection, windows/bamboo sheets on the upper half for airflow, and insulated tin roof on timber construction as the rest of the buildings on site.

Karen people normally sit on the floor and eat with their hands. The kitchen is adapted to this eating habits, with no chairs nor tables in the dining room. The feedback from the students and teachers are that the kitchen/dining room is functioning well.



<i>Project budget:</i>	17 085,- NOK
<i>Project costs:</i>	16 582,- NOK*
<i>Size:</i>	47 square meters. 2 buildings each with 3 toilets and 1 shower.
<i>Materials:</i>	Timber construction, half walls burned bricks and bamboo sheets on a concrete slab with tin roof.
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Gyaw Gyaw
<i>Project start:</i>	February 2015
<i>Project finished:</i>	March 2015

With dormitories, functional and hygienic toilets and shower facilities are a necessity. Separate facilities for boys and girls were a demand from the school, and toilets/showers have been built next to the dormitories.

They are traditional toilets and showers, but improved with materials and design for the most efficient use. The toilets are squat toilets with a waterpool next to it for hygiene and the showers are relatively big pools with water, for the students to pour over their bodies with plastic scoops. It's important to avoid soap and water to drain back into the clean pool, so it is given extra space around the pools for students to keep the water as clean as possible.

The pit for production of adobe bricks conveniently placed behind the toilets, doubles as a septic tank.

Thanks to our partners at Solbakken Organization, the water access at the campus is good. The drinking water system they provided in phase I of the project is functioning well and the access for showers and toilets are also good.



<i>Project budget:</i>	30 000,- NOK
<i>Project cost:</i>	29 269,- NOK*
<i>Size:</i>	27 square meters.
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Gyaw Gyaw and workshop participants from Asplan Viak and HENT
<i>Materials:</i>	Concrete slab, light timber construction, bamboo sticks, tin roof.
<i>Project start:</i>	February 2015 (2 weeks project)
<i>Project finished:</i>	February 2015

* Includes transportation, food and accomodation for the workshop participants and extra administrative costs to arrange the workshop.

This year, six participants from Asplan Viak and one participant from HENT, joined us for a two week workshop, designing and constructing a shelter and study space for Academy School in our village Noh Bo.

Cross-cultural exchanges like this, is of vital importance to show by example how we work and approach a project. By living and working together for two weeks we can hopefully learn the participants something about development work in our region, and put it into a context. As the participants are highly skilled in different subject relevant to our work, we try to utilize these weeks by also learning as much as possible from them.

In our first workshops, our main concern was for the participants to get a high academic output. As the years have gone by, we have learned that it's more about creating a common ground for the participants and our team to meet for a cultural exchange. When communication is given a plausible ground, the design and construction issues have an arena to develop.

Logistically, it is an advantage to work on a project close to Noh Bo. It also have to be on the Thai side of the border and a project that either can be completed within the two weeks the workshop lasts, or that have elements that can be both designed and built within this limited time frame.

Candle Paw, the headmistress of Academy school, has for many years been a central collaborator for Gyaw Gyaw and we have completed several projects to improve the schools physical conditions. This time the roles were changed, and we were the ones in need of a project for our own development. A hangout/study space for the students was something Candle Paw had had in mind for quite a while, but it had never made it to the top of her list. For us it fitted perfect as a workshop project.

For better control and a more evident use of the limited time available, Line made several ideas for the participants and Gyaw Gyaw members to discuss in teams. They then came up with further developed suggestions for Candle Paw to decide upon.

Since we had a formwork carpenter among us, concrete got extra attention and we made a lifted and levelled roof covered concrete slab with an existing root as the central point/table and light transparent bamboo walls for a more delimited area.

The study space is often in use, and we are very happy to see our project being utilized like this.

The two classrooms we built on the workshop in 2011 at the same site, needed a little facelift to regain its beauty. To make the workshop participant familiar with adobe as a material, this was perfect timing for us to renovate the building. A new coating was added, the windows were repainted, and the bamboo walls were replaced, leaving it with the looks of a brand new building.



Pictures from the workshop

Photo: Line Ramstad

Maw Kwee Primary School - Roof adjustment and new coating



<i>Project budget:</i>	36 000,- NOK
<i>Project cost:</i>	27 643,- NOK
<i>Size:</i>	60 square meters
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Gyaw Gyaw
<i>Materials:</i>	Timber for extended roof and insulated tin sheets for new roof materials. New adobe coating and replaced bamboo windows.
<i>Project start:</i>	May 2015
<i>Project finished:</i>	June 2015

We started the Maw Kwee Primary school project in 2010 and left it through rainy season with roof and concrete floor finished, but with temporary bamboo walls for the school to continue their classes until the next long break. It was further designed and finished with adobe walls by Gyaw Gyaw and workshop participants in 2011.

The primary school in Maw Kwee was one of our first projects. With more experience, we recognised that the narrow space and closed roof left the classrooms warmer and darker than desired. In cooperation with the school, we decided to make some improvements. By extending one of the roof sides and removing the top of the other, we created a gap for vertical airflow and more light. We also changed the roof plates to insulated tin plates that both lowered the temperature and reflected more light inside the rooms. Peter, as the main construction worker, was in charge of the project and even if this school still is a bit warmer and with less airflow than our later projects, the gap in the roof and the reflective material have made qualified improvements, both in temperature, airflow and light.



Before



After



After 4 years of wear and tear, the adobe walls were also in need of a new final coat. When first there, we also gave it a visual upgrade.



Noh Bo Academy - Kitchen and dining hall renovation



<i>Project budget:</i>	74 011,- NOK
<i>Project costs:</i>	59 468,- NOK*
<i>Size:</i>	147 square meters
<i>Design/implementation:</i>	Gyaw Gyaw
<i>Materials:</i>	Concrete for smoothening walls, new floor layer and the washing area. Reuse of wooden slats.
<i>Project start:</i>	December 2015
<i>Project finished:</i>	January 2016**

* Costs for the complete building. The project was completely finished in the first quarter of 2016, but the last weeks were used to refurbish furnitures. Total costs 2016: 1 088,- NOK. Total costs: 60 556,- NOK.

For many years the kitchen and dining hall of the Noh Boh Academy School has been a building of disgrace, and in dire need of an upgrade. It is a concrete building, working partly as a kitchen, a storage room for cooking coal, and dining area for the 250 students at the academy.

The kitchen was of a temporary character and dark and dysfunctional. With half rotten bamboo walls and no floor, it made hygiene a challenge and the work of the chef more difficult than necessary. The dining area was also dark and unpleasant, and the roof was filled with ash and falling apart. The main construction was still in decent shape, and the half walls with concrete bricks were possible to reuse.

Normally we strive to minimize the use of concrete in our project, but since the main timber construction was still intact, and the concrete works already done was in a good shape, it was easier, cheaper, and more environmentally friendly to renovate the building, than to tear it down and rebuild it. We rebuilt the kitchen, moved the storage room, lowered and smoothened the half walls and changed the roof.

Now the school has adequate dining facilities, meeting the daily needs of the school and its students.

Before



After

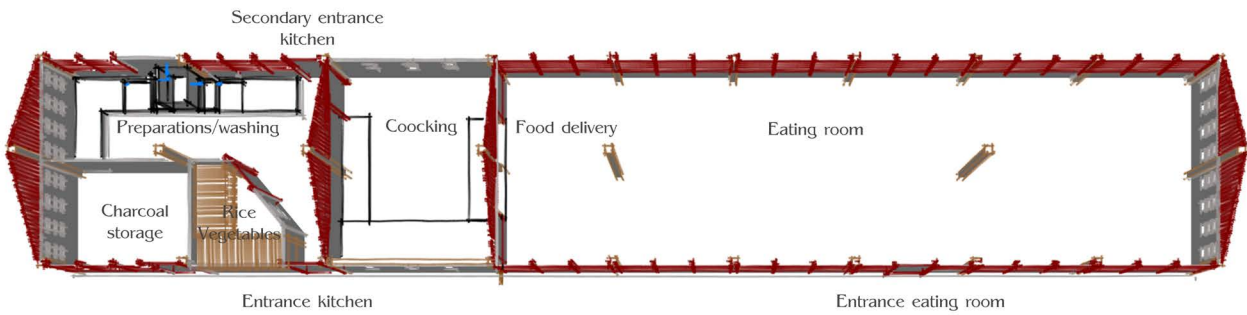


Photo: Line Ramstad



Photo: Ole Michelsen

Support of local community

Part of our philosophy is to be an integral part of the local community, but by being from a western country, we have access to financial support. Through acquaintances and connections who cares about the work we do, we have the opportunity to contribute to help others.

We focus a lot on education! Through our everyday work, we provide good physical environments for students, but even with good access to a school, there are often cultural or economical pull-factors hindering children's education. The cost of education might not be high in itself, it is in general free, but by sending the children to school, parents lose hands helping out with domestic duties or working in the fields.

By providing free food to certain schools we know well, we try to tear down economical barriers, that can constrain education.

"The Rice Project", is such a project. Every month we support the school in Maw Kwee, and dormitories for boarding student in Mae Tari and Noh Bo with rice, the staple food of the region. The project is run in close collaboration with the Norwegian football club Vestkysten Sportsklubb helping us financing the delivery of a totally 10,2 metric tons of rice in 2015.

Total amount spent on the rice project in 2015 is 46.216,- NOK

Other support project is covering medical expenses, funeral expenses, mosquito nets to medical clinics, and blankets to the boarding students in Gaw La Heh School, Karen State.

Total amount spent on other support projects in our local community in 2015 is 10 577,- NOK

Gyaw Gyaw / Ingerids Education Fund

Email from Naw Debbie:

“My life in James Madison University is extremely amazing than words can express. I met a lot of new friends and learn many of their cultures. Although I had a little culture shock at first, I used to it after a while. I had to struggle a lot with my study as it is my first time learning with the native speakers. Everyone is very friendly and kind. There are also many events organized by the school which motivates me to love the life of college more. I have attended Women Leadership Conference and it was really worth it because it encourages women to have confidence to be a better leader. It also motivates me try the best for my Karen ethnic as one of the women leaders. Every moment is precious for me in college and I am really fortunate to be in this university. I am trying my best to learn as much as I can with the aim of improving the lifestyle of Karen people.”

Through the years family and friends have, via us, supported local students in need of financial assistance to further their education. In 2015 we decided to incorporate this support under the Gyaw Gyaw umbrella and establish the Gyaw Gyaw Education Fund.

Thailand's reluctance to ratify the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol means that the country does not have a refugee law, nor a functioning asylum institute. For young Karen or Burmese students, this means they are not eligible to further their educational opportunities within the Thai educational system. There are a few higher education opportunities in Mae Sot, run by other NGOs, but the number of students accepted is very limited.

Through the help of teachers and others with knowledge and connection to the NGO world, some hardworking students get the chance to study abroad. Students from the border have been accepted in colleges and universities in third countries like Australia, New Zealand and the United States, but without help, the cost of tuition fees and plane tickets is beyond their family's capacity.

The aim of the fund is to contribute with financial support to young, motivated students who excel in their class, fulfilling their educational aspirations.

The fund is limited, and we cannot help everyone, but by giving to the right people, they again can contribute to others in the future. Before supporting, we therefore do a thorough research. The students have to write a letter of motivation, also explaining their background, their goals and opportunities for the future.

In 2015 we supported three young girls, Paw Pearl Wah, Thaw Thi, and Naw Debbie with plane tickets. Paw Pearl Wah and Thaw Thi had just finished Teacher Training Academy in Noh Bo, and were accepted at a college in New Zealand. Naw Debbie now studies medicine in Virginia, USA.

We are very impressed by the motivation and resilience of these three girls, and now they are doing their best and enjoy their time as students abroad.

Totally money spend from the Gyaw Gyaw Education Fund in 2015 is 11.252,- NOK

Safe Haven Orphanage

For many years, our faithful private sponsors have been the sole source of steady monthly income to Tasanee Keerepraneed and her Safe Haven Orphanage in Mae Tawor. The orphanage is now home to 71 children of all ages. Private sponsors contribute with 200,- to 400,- Norwegian kroner pr. month through Gyaw Gyaw. Every month we transfer the funds to Tasanee. Without this vital support, the children could not get the care and education they deserve.

In 2015, Gyaw Gyaw supported, through our sponsors, the orphanage with totally 141.337,- NOK

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Sometimes we get some nice emails in our inboxes. This year, Else-Linn Haga Øverkli, the initiator of the NovemberMarked in Trondheim, Norway approached us. NovemberMarked is a non-profit local grass root initiative, raising money from sales and concert tickets for a humanitarian cause. She had heard about Gyaw Gyaw through common friends, and wanted the surplus from this years marked to be donated to us. A total of 121.000 Norwegian kroner were raised during one weekend in November. We are very grateful for this contribution, and it really has come in handy for our work.

At the same time in Bergen, the Norwegian street artist JOY, donated 13 of his art pieces to an auction held by Vestkysten Sportsklubb. The auction was a great success, generating a total of 76.700 Norwegian kroner to the rice project. This money will come to the benefit of the local community in many years to come. We are very grateful for this generous gift from JOY.

One time fund-raising events like these are great, but the most important contributors are the yearly sponsors who faithfully support our work and philosophy year after year. HENT, Asplan Viak, BAIAS and Jessheim Rotary Klubb have been following us from the very start, giving us long-term financial sustainability as an organization. We are very lucky to have such good and faithful sponsors, believing and trusting in us. We are grateful and humble for their support.

We also have some good friends and supporters who every month donate a sum to our account for us to spend on our projects. It`s highly appreciated and needed.

So a big and special THANK YOU to HENT AS, Asplan Viak, BAIAS, Jessheim Rotary Klubb and the regular donors who make our work on the ground possible.



Photo by Jonathan González

PUBLICATIONS, SEMINARIES, EXHIBITIONS AND PRIZES

Where 2014 popped up as a year filled with new worldwide experiences, 2015 has been a quiet year in those aspects, a year back to normality.

2015 did however provide us with our first prize nomination ever. At least, this is the first nomination ever given in our name. It is called the Terra Award and is the first international prize for contemporary earthen architecture with the CRATERre organization in France as the main organizer under the auspices of UNESCO chair "earthen architectures".


As with most architectural awards, this prize is also based on submissions from the architects themselves, but in comparison to the many less serious organizers out there, we have experienced that this prize takes their research seriously. There's no "like and share" on Facebook, but a seriousness we appreciate, and we feel respectfully and fairly treated in the process. They were also serious in their approach during of the application process, so we decided to put an effort into submitting our Kler Deh project for this award.

With almost 400 participants, it was a great honor to be listed among the 40 finalists. The prize will be given out in Lyon, France in July 2016. Being recognized amongst all these highly qualified projects from around the world, however feels like a victory already.

Testimonials:

"This world-wide prize and its exhibition about earthen architectures will lay the foundations for an international atlas of the best recent projects."

HUBERT GUILLAUD, architect, CRATERre-ENSAG (France)



Kler Deh High School
Kler Deh, Karen State, Burma - 2014/2015

Address:
Kler Deh, Karen State, Burma

Client:
Kler Deh High School

Architects:
Hubert Guillaud, CRATERre-ENSAG

Engineering contractors:
CRATERre-ENSAG

Earthen companies:
CRATERre-ENSAG

GEOSPHERICAL COORDINATES
Latitude: 17°15'N Longitude: 97°15'E





CATEGORIES

TECHNIQUES

KEY FIGURES

Kler Deh High School
Kler Deh, Karen State, Burma - 2014/2015

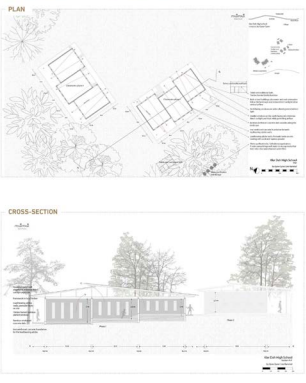
DESCRIPTION

TECHNIQUES

Kler Deh High School
Kler Deh, Karen State, Burma - 2014/2015


PLAN & CROSS-SECTION



TECHNIQUES

Kler Deh High School
Kler Deh, Karen State, Burma - 2014/2015

TECHNIQUE



TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

TECHNIQUES

RESULTS AND BUDGETS

* All numbers in NOK

STATEMENT OF INCOME

	OPERATING REVENUE		BUDGET	
	2015	2014	2015	2016
Corporate Sponsorship	370 000	311 000	360 000	360 000
Regular Monthly Private Donations	24 500	21 300	25 000	32 000
Lump Sum Private Donations	146 802	54 665	25 000	40 000
Project Income*	17 206	40 540	0	0
Loan payback Income	215	0	0	0
Other Income	137 960	47 185	20 000	30 000
SUM OPERATING REVENUE	696 683	474 691	430 000	462 000

	OPERATING EXPENCES		BUDGET	
	2015	2014	2016	
Project Costs	395 701	419 699		400 000
Administration Costs	105 921	76 520		75 000
Support Projects Local Communities	56 793	28 670		50 000
Medical Costs	29 187	0		3 000
Social Costs	7 767	8 845		5 000
Plane Tickets	14 839	6 875		15 000
Debt Back Payment	3 500			
Depreciation and Amortization	12 258			12 000
Other Costs	3 500	879		1 000
SUM OPERATING EXPENCES	679 466	541 488		561 000
NET OPERATING RESULT	67 217	-66 797		-99 000

	FINANCIAL RESULT		BUDGET	
	2015	2014	2016	
Net Interest Rate Income	4 262	11 889		4 000
Financial Costs	-1 100	-627		-1 000
NET FINANCIAL RESULT	3 162	11 262		3 000
NET OPERATING INCOME	70 379	-55 535		- 96 000

BALANCE SHEET

	FIXED ASSETS	
	2015	2014
Vehicles	114 918	70 000
Photo, Computer, Telecom Equipment	35 000	40 000
Computer Software	3 474	3 474
Tools and Machinery	30 000	40 000
Materials	4 000	0
SUM ASSETS	187 392	153 474

	CURRENT ASSETS	
	2015	2014
Accounts receivables	5 139	0
Bank Deposit Norway	427 302	417 163
Bank deposit Thailand	73 781	53 951
Cash	1 605	1 475
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	507 827	472 589

	EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	
	2015	2014
EQUITY		
Paid-up equity	0	0
Retained earnings	507 827	472 588
TOTAL EQUITY	507 827	472 588
TOTAL CURRENT DEBT		
Deferred tax	3 685	0
Other provisions	0	3 500
TOTAL EQUITY	698 904	629 562

Comments to the result

In 2014, one of our biggest financial challenges was the depreciation of Norwegian kroner compared to Thai Baht. We lost almost 30 % in local purchasing power over the year. The depreciation continued through 2015, in average 18 % all over the year. Exchange rate fluctuations is out of our control, but be hope and believe the situation will stabilize in 2016.

Revenue raised in 2015 increased with 47 %. This massive increase was because of extraordinary fund raising events. These are pop-up events that happens every now and then, maybe also in 2016, but it is of a more uncertain character and we do not budget for it. Thus, we estimate a budget deficit of almost 100.000 NOK in 2016. This is of course not ideal, and we will continue our work to partner up with another larger corporate sponsor for the months to come to continue our current level of activity in the future.

Our operating expenses saw a rise in support of local community. The rice project has proven needed and been successfully achieved on the ground. With extra support from Vestkysten Sk, it has therefor been expanded. Our project costs for 2015 were lower then 2014, mostly due to the fact that we did not install solar power in any of our projects this year.

Every January we increase the salaries for all the workers in Gyaw Gyaw. The prices of a staple food, like rice, has been rising over the last years, so also the general living cost. A decent salary with adequate social benefits, is a cornerstone in the Norwegian welfare model. In our case, a lack of a functioning government requires us as an organization to take this role. With serious inputs from the team, we are emphasising on adjusting benefits and salaries in line with the common practice and price level in the village. It is in everyone's interest to have benefits and a salary that are as locally adjusted as possible. In addition to money itself, the strong community ties are determining for peoples lives, and jealousy and gossip can be devastating.

On overall the financial situation of Gyaw Gyaw is still solid, but we the budget for 2016 emphasize the importance of increasing our current level of revenue. We will continue the work to attract both corporate and private sponsors for the months to come.



Gyaw Gyaw team 2015

Photo: Line Ramstad

PROSPECTS 2016

Since the start in 2009, we have steadily developed both as a team and as individuals. We have been taking small steps forward, some back again and some wobbly ones, but all the time with a learning process in mind and an awareness that we in general are moving in the right direction.

With experience comes confidence, and the steps have been more steady and straight, resulting in ever-new organizational qualities and responsibilities taken in a broader specter from the group in general. Design and carpentry skills have been improved and trusty connections with the local communities are easier established now than earlier. Everyone knows who we are, and their expectations are to a bigger extent mirroring us and what we can do.

2016 will hopefully be a further step in this direction and there are new and exiting projects and experiences ahead.

First project will be to design and construct a long promised library at New Generation School in Karen State. This is a leadership school with around 40 students, run by Karen Education Department. The school is situated half an hour north of our base in Noh Bo, in the jungle on the Burma side of the river. It will be a smaller project, but adjusted to their need and we are sure the library will be a great contribution to further knowledge improvements for the students at this well-established school.

After the library, we will start to design and build new classrooms, dormitories and toilets for Gaw La Heh school in Seh Poe Kee village. We will also improve their existing kitchen facilities. This will be a large-scale project, maybe the largest we have done so far.

It is an existing and well run primary school with almost 200 students, half of them boarding students. The school is one of the bigger education centers in the region, and has great support from both the parents and the villagers who are proud of what they have achieved so far.

After the roof blew off their rather temporary buildings last year, the school is in desperate need of new infrastructure. We will refurbish their existing kitchen, and design and build three new classrooms before the rainy season. We will gradually further expand the project in close collaboration with the local leaders, Karen Education Department and the schools well respected headmaster in the months to come. We really believe in this project, and we can't wait to get started.

Rainy season is, as always, low season in Gyaw Gyaw. It starts approximately in June and lasts for three to four months with heavy rainfall and muddy roads. It makes work outside and any transportation much more difficult. With the schools roof completed in time, we will finish the classrooms also after the first rain has arrived. There will also be done some minor indoor projects for other schools in the region. Rainy season is holiday and family time as well. With last years holiday savings in mind, everyone is happy to keep saving 20 baht a day for a full salary in August this and coming years.

With many exciting projects and experiences to come, we are looking forward to another interesting year together with our friends and colleagues in Gyaw Gyaw.

On behalf of Gyaw Gyaw, Ole and Line



Photo: Line Ramstad