

February 2019



# ***Magic Bus Myanmar***

*Programme rollout report 2018*

## Magic Bus Myanmar

Magic Bus is an international NGO implementing a unique 'Childhood to Livelihood' programme, specifically designed to support those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalised communities. We aim to bring children out of poverty by ensuring that they complete secondary education and are equipped with the life skills and knowledge they need to eventually transition to employment.

In Myanmar, we currently work in the two townships of Thanlyin and Hlaing Thar Yar, both located in the Yangon Region. We initiate the programme with children aged 11-13, and with our continued rollout we will work with them throughout their adolescent years until they are able to secure stable jobs as young adults. Based on our ecosystem approach, we also engage parents and community stakeholders at large so that beneficiaries are fully supported throughout their journey.

### The team

We are a lean organisation that aims to work efficiently and resourcefully. Our senior leadership is based overseas and communicates regularly with the Myanmar-based team, visiting in person on a monthly/bi-monthly basis. Members of our local management team have previously worked in the private, education and NGO sectors and apply their wide range of skills to deliver the programme across the two Yangon townships. Our Youth Mentors interact directly with beneficiaries by leading weekly activity sessions in community and school settings, and build rapport to become trusted programme ambassadors. Volunteer Community Coordinators are members of our partner communities and schools who provide valuable local insight and liaise directly with children and their families.

### Magic Bus Myanmar organisational structure



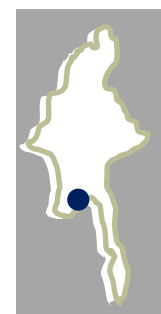
### Project areas

#### Thanlyin

Thanlyin township, located to the east of the city of Yangon, is home to the Thilawa Special Economic Zone and port, as well as the Myanmar Maritime University and a number of other higher education institutions. As the township is separated from central Yangon by

Bago River, ongoing efforts are being made to improve access to the city through the construction of a new bridge and the development of ferry services.

Most Magic Bus beneficiaries in Thanlyin are children of factory workers and vendors. Some families engage in small-scale fishing and vegetable farming.



Yangon, Myanmar

### Hlaing Thar Yar

Hlaing Thar Yar township is located to the west of the city of Yangon, and is the largest and most densely populated township in Myanmar. Following Cyclone Nargis in 2008 – which was the worst natural disaster in the country's recorded history – many displaced survivors from the affected Ayeyarwady Region settled in the township, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of residents. The township is home to the Hlaing Thar Yar Industrial Zone, which mainly focuses on the production of garments and other consumer goods. In recent years, some areas of Hlaing Thar Yar have become associated with severe poverty and crime.

Most Magic Bus beneficiaries in the township are children of factory workers, vendors and day laborers, who often have unstable sources of income.

### Township profiles

2017 data

Indicator	Thanlyin	Hlaing Thar Yar
Total population	268,063	687,867
Population density (person per square kilometre)	496.7	5,504.8
Sex ratio (number of males per 100 females)	94.9	88.5
Children in 10-14 age group	24,854	63,778
Children in 15-19 age group	27,854	71,642
Number of wards	17	20
Number of village tracts <sup>1</sup>	28	9
Urban population (%)	32.1	70.1
Rural population (%) <sup>2</sup>	67.9	29.9

### Magic Bus curriculum

Our activity-based curriculum has been carefully developed over 20 years, since the founding of Magic Bus in India. We ensure that this curriculum is tailored to the Myanmar context where required, making it relevant to the children enrolled in our programme. The initial focus with 11-13-year olds is to develop five core life skills that will benefit the children in the future as they grow older. These life skills are:



<sup>1</sup> Village tracts are administrative subdivisions of rural townships, equivalent to wards in urban townships.

<sup>2</sup> Despite the townships being located in Yangon Region, there are a number of areas that fall under the category of 'rural'. However, Magic Bus works only in the urban areas of these townships.

## Beneficiaries

As of December 2018, 1,280 children aged 11-13 were registered with the programme, with a slightly higher enrolment of girls compared to boys. Within the two townships of Thanlyin and Hlaing Thar Yar, we currently work with eight communities (villages) and three schools (monasteries).

Although we have exceeded our target number of beneficiaries, our team works continuously to ensure sustained engagement with children and their families. We are also rolling out a new strategy for programme expansion in 2019 (see 'Developments in 2019').

### Beneficiaries

2018 results

	Planned	Actual
Total beneficiaries	1,000	1,280
No. of boys	500	626
No. of girls	500	654
No. of townships	2	2
No. of communities	8	8
No. of schools/monasteries <sup>3</sup>	3	3



Children engage in activities during the weekly sessions

### Magic Bus weekly sessions

Our team runs one-hour sessions with registered children on a weekly basis; these take place on weekends at our partner communities and on weekdays at our partner schools. During the sessions, Youth Mentors lead various games and activities focused on developing the five core life skills. Time for reflection is provided at the end of each session to reinforce key messages.

Our efforts are also focused on supporting children to stay in school and progress to the next grade level. The weekly interactions are supplemented with home visits to ensure that dropout rates are minimised.



### Activity sessions

2018 results

	Planned	Actual
Average number of children per group	25	28
Sessions conducted per week	45	45
Total sessions conducted per month	180	180
Total sessions conducted per year	1,316	1,258
Children with regular school attendance	1,280	1,267
Children progressing to next grade level	1,267	1,267



<sup>3</sup> Monastic schools are funded by private donors and fill a unique gap by offering education to children from remote regions of Myanmar where there is little or no access to schools. Economically disadvantaged families often send their children to these schools with a promise to train them as novice nuns and monks. In return, the monastery takes care of the basic needs of the children, which families would otherwise be unable to afford.



## Quarterly parent meetings

In addition to weekly sessions with the children, we hold quarterly parent meetings to engage community members and encourage support for the programme among families. The meetings provide opportunities for staff to explain the Magic Bus vision, objectives and activities, and participants are invited to jointly discuss their children's performance, needs, and future development. Wider social issues are often raised, including the importance of allowing children to complete secondary education and to delay marriage.



Parents at a quarterly meeting

In 2018, we conducted four meetings at each of our partner communities and schools. These were generally well attended, with a high level of support for the programme.

## Community events

Every year, we conduct a number of community events to highlight important issues that are relevant to children and their families. In 2018, we organised three events which took place at different times of the year and were held at each community and school:

- **Mother's Day celebration:** Mother's Day events in May encouraged children to reflect on their relationships with their mothers, and to express their feelings of appreciation. During two-hour sessions led by Youth Mentors, children made Mother's Day cards and 'gratitude' posters. The activities aimed to foster creativity among children, as well as develop their communication skills.
- **Tree planting:** A series of tree planting events were held at communities and schools in August to celebrate International Youth Day. The events encouraged the development of sustainable, supportive communities that nurture children as well as the natural environment. Children, parents, teachers and other community members planted a total of 375 saplings in public areas.
- **Community clean-up:** Community clean-up events were organised in Thanlyin township in October and November. Prior to each event, the team engaged children in discussions and games to highlight the negative effects of litter on humans, animals, plants and the broader environment. On the day of the event, children and other community members worked together to pick up litter in public areas. Youth Mentors then led hand-washing sessions with each group to emphasise the importance of hygiene. In total, 1,020 participants collected 200 bags of litter.



Children plant tree saplings



Participants after a successful clean-up event

## Annual event

Games & Fun Day, our annual sports day tournament, brings together all of our beneficiaries to celebrate the work of Magic Bus over the past year. More than 1,100 participants attended our most recent Games & Fun Day in early January 2019. Children thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to play a wide range of games and build friendships.

Through the event, our team engaged media, local government offices and corporate sponsors. We were also delighted to welcome professional football player Kyaw Zin Htet as one of our many guests on the day.



*A day of fun to celebrate the work of Magic Bus*



*Children participate in races and other games*



*Communities and schools at the opening ceremony*

## Internal training

We strive to continuously develop the required skills and knowledge among our staff to deliver a high-quality programme. These include our weekly meetings where progress, challenges, and new initiatives are discussed in detail, as well as regular training for Youth Mentors and Community Coordinators. We ensure staff capacity building through discussions on key procedures and guidelines such as our HR and child protection policies. Many of our staff also attend English classes organised by volunteer teachers at Dulwich College Yangon.

Once a year, a five-day residential course is led by colleagues from Magic Bus India, who visit Myanmar to train our management staff, Youth Mentors and Community Coordinators. Participants discuss objectives for the upcoming year and practice new activities to conduct with the children. The annual internal training course ensures that the work in Myanmar is aligned with the broader Magic Bus programme, and that best practice is shared across teams.



*The Myanmar team with their trainers from India*



## Internal training 2018 results

	Planned	Actual
Staff weekly meetings	48	48
CC monthly meetings	12	12
New CC Training	5	5
Staff capacity building	29	23
India team training	1	1



Community Coordinators during their monthly training session

## Donors & partnerships

Our programme partner since 2016 is the Dulwich International Schools Foundation, the charitable foundation of international school group Dulwich College International. In addition to providing funding, staff and students from Dulwich College Yangon have participated in a number of our events. Members of our team also visit the school's Star City (Thanlyin) campus to attend English classes delivered by volunteer teachers. We keep the school community updated on our activities through quarterly newsletters.

Other donations in 2018 included:

- **British Ball Yangon:** We were fortunate to be selected as the main charity beneficiary of the second annual British Ball held in May. The event was co-organised by Dulwich College Yangon and the British Chamber of Commerce Myanmar, with over 360 guests in attendance.
- **Sports equipment:** In November, Malaysia-based AFN Sports, a leading sports equipment manufacturer that supplies Dulwich College Yangon, made a donation of footballs, cones, relay rods and megaphones in support of our cause.

## News & media

In 2018, we were mentioned in the Myanmar Times and other publications for our involvement in the British Ball. We were also featured in Myanmar's international education magazine in September due to our close partnership with Dulwich College Yangon.

We were very excited to receive recent media coverage when footage of Games & Fun Day was aired on local news channel MRTV-4 in early January 2019. Highlights included scenes of the children enjoying the games, as well as an interview with our staff.



## Developments in 2019

Magic Bus will be targeting a total of 4,000 registered children in 2019/2020 by introducing the programme at government schools. This reflects a shift in the Magic Bus strategy as the main beneficiaries to date have been village communities and monastic schools.

In preparation for the rollout, the team has completed a mapping exercise to identify suitable government schools. Demonstration sessions took place in January 2019 to trial the programme at three schools, selected due to their high enrolment of existing Magic Bus children from our partner communities. The sessions enabled children and teachers to familiarise themselves with the programme, whilst also providing an opportunity for the Magic Bus team to ensure that the activities work well within the new settings.

## Stories from the field

*Our students represent different ethnicities and many come from very poor families; some are in single parent families or have no parents. The children experience various social and financial challenges on a daily basis. However, after joining Magic Bus, they seem happier, more focused on their studies, and are getting along with each other much better.*

— Teacher at monastic school

A parent from Kun Chan Kone Village commented on how many of the children seemed to have gained confidence. It was also observed that they were able to communicate with greater ease.

At Kyaik Inn Village, parents noticed an improvement in their children's time management skills. They commented that their children were now taking responsibility and finishing their chores on time to attend the Magic Bus sessions. Parents felt that their children were also able to follow instructions better than before.



*Our children are always eager to tell us about the activities they learn at Magic Bus. We've seen them teach the activities to their friends [who are not enrolled in the programme], and they will play the games even when the Youth Mentors are not around.'*

— Parent



*My daughter has had some health issues, but since joining Magic Bus she seems more energetic. She is always excited to join the weekly sessions.*

— Parent



A Community Coordinator from one of our project areas observed that children were being more diligent towards their academics as they were able to visualise and work towards long-term goals in education.