



Dear donors and sponsors...

'Forgotten people in a forgotten country!' We gave this title to a short film that we made as a foundation in 2009, when we started our projects in Myanmar. At that time, the junta had been in power in that country for almost five decades. In 2011, after fifty years of military oppression of the population, hope appeared for the first time on the horizon. Unfortunately, the military seized power again ten years later, to be precise on February 1, 2021. There was great outrage in the world, but no action was taken because the superpowers Russia and China would not have tolerated it.



For a while, Myanmar was all over the news. That attention quickly disappeared. From February 2022, the news was dominated by the war between Russia and Ukraine. Since October 2023, this has become the war between Israel and Palestine. However, the armed conflict in Myanmar continues in full force. That's why the title of our 2009 film is more appropriate than ever.

What's going on?

The military dictatorship that began in 1962 is clearly explained on the Amnesty International website. It also briefly discusses the protests that followed over the fifty years of oppression. Just take a look at www.amnesty.nl/myanmar-wat-is-er-aan-de-hand (in Dutch). In this 2023 Annual Report, we pick up the thread on the peaceful protests that arose after the new coup in 2021. The text in this introduction comes partly from the Amnesty International website.

2021: Youth in revolt

When they took over, the military had assessed the young generation differently. Young people in Myanmar have lived with more freedom and opportunities since 2011. They revolted en masse after the coup. Initially, people protested from home by making noise with pots and pans. But soon hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across the country. People did not want to return to a dictatorship, especially the young generation.



The soldiers suppressed the peaceful demonstrations with increasing violence. Many people were killed and injured. Countless demonstrators were imprisoned for years without trial. Aung San Suu Kyi, the spokeswoman of the opposition and the fighter for freedom and democracy, was charged under vague laws and sentenced to years in prison. With her many other opposition leaders.

2022: Popular uprising becomes armed resistance

After the coup, the junta increasingly faced fierce resistance from pro-democracy groups and insurgents among ethnic minorities. To the surprise of everyone, the junta failed to eradicate the resistance. What started as a courageous campaign of civil disobedience led to tens of thousands of civilians joining armed groups. This also reignited the longrunning conflicts between the army and ethnic armed militias.



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2023: The junta loses ground

At the end of 2023, an alliance of three ethnic armed militias launched a large-scale offensive against army targets in northern Shan State. The operation was a success. Large parts of the territory were conquered, including military bases and border crossings. This emboldened civilians and led to a new wave of attacks by groups across the country, now also in the west. Many important roads and large areas of land have now been occupied by the alliance.



This was a major blow to the army and a huge boost to the opposition's morale. For the first time, many people in Myanmar see a future without the generals - no matter how far away. It appears that China is secretly supplying the alliance in the east with weapons to maintain stability along its borders.

But even without the junta, the country faces an uncertain future. Although many ethnic groups have already agreed to a future federal system and see positive signs for long-term cooperation between communities, different priorities and conflicting interests can still lead to rifts.

2024: The year of truth?

Will 2024 be the year of truth? According to the UN, the army is intensifying the scorched earth tactic: More and more villages, schools, hospitals and other civilian targets are being targeted. More cases of sexual violence, murder, execution, beheading and mutilation are also being reported.



Soldiers are given alcohol and drugs by their officers to ruthlessly wreak havoc in the countryside. According to Amnesty International, more than 2.5 million Myanmar people have now fled. About 120,000 refugees live in camps at the border between Myanmar and Thailand. The vast majority of these consist of the Karen. Another 200,000 displaced Karen live in the jungle along the border.

For the second year in a row, one of our project volunteers in the Thai border town of Mae Sot is helping to ease the suffering of the refugees and bring some joy to life.



According to a recent UN report, a third of Myanmar's population now needs humanitarian aid. Children are the hardest hit by the crisis. Six million children are in need, due to displacement, interrupted health and education, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as protection risks, including forced recruitment and mental distress.

Spiral of poverty

Due to the corona crisis and the military coup, the country has entered the spiral of poverty. International companies withdrew, orders for factories were cancelled, companies and shops were forced to close their doors, hotels and restaurants no longer had guests, rural residents were no longer allowed to trade their agricultural products in the city and so on. Many of Myanmar's day labourers have had little income in the past three years.





Theft is currently the order of the day. International aid is no longer available and the work of NGOs is under pressure. The military controls trade lines, money flows and the internet. The people of Myanmar have been left to fend for themselves. In short: Forgotten people in a forgotten country!

Bright spots

Is there only misery in Myanmar? No fortunately not! There are also bright spots. We see enormous resilience among the population to survive and help each other. And although many government schools are closed because the teachers do not want to work under a military regime, many monastery schools take their responsibility and continue to educate the youth. Many citizen initiatives have also emerged to offer children some education.



A school that is also still running at full speed is the Phaung Daw Oo High School in the city of Mandalay. We have been supporting this school with our foundation for fifteen years.



At this Buddhist monastery school, 8,500 children and young people receive free education every day from more than 300 teachers. About 1,400 students currently live on the school grounds permanently. These are 200 older girls, 700 novices (young monks) and 500 children and young people, mostly from ethnic areas. The World Child Care Foundation takes care of the latter group. They live in the residential groups The Golden House and The Hostel. Cooking is done three times a day for this group, but since the coup also for the 700 novices. Previously, they would go through the street with their rice bowl to collect food, but due to the increased poverty among the population, this is no longer possible.



Financial problems

During the double crisis in the past three years, PDO High School has run into financial difficulties. The school management is having the greatest possible difficulty in managing the operation, because local and international support has decreased. While inflation has risen by 300 to 400 percent, faculty and staff still receive only part of their original salaries. As a result, we were confronted with some distressing cases in the private sphere among our staff, teachers and students. Fortunately, as a foundation we were able to assist with money donated especially for these cases.

The school is under close military control. Spies control everything: the education program, the exams, business operations, finances, cash flows and communications. The military is not happy that the school receives many donations from fo-



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reign NGOs. They fear that this will support the uprising of the rebel armies. Fortunately, so far we have been able to transfer money to the school to support our projects without any problems, without the military being able to withhold a percentage of it.

U Nayaka, the head monk of the school, is under enormous pressure. In three years he has aged ten years, say those directly involved. Yet he does not think about stopping his ideological and educational work. "Children and young people need to be educated," he says. "Knowledge gives self-confidence. The youth has the future. Peace and freedom are just one generation away. That is the generation that is going to school now!"



These powerful words from U Nayaka encourage us to continue our work. Despite all the troubles in Myanmar, we as a foundation continue to focus as best as possible on the projects at the PDO High School. Working visits are currently not possible, but we have intensive contact with teachers, staff and school management. The school has no government interference and as a foundation we keep aloof from politics and the regime. The school plays an important regional role and is therefore a good place to invest.

As a foundation, we do this by providing better living and studying conditions for the children, in further studies and by offering future prospects for young people. Young adults who have completed their secondary education can participate in the English & Life Skills Program supported by us. More about that later.



The Golden House

Our support for the school started in May 2008 with the purchase of two houses on the edge of the school grounds. At that time, a cyclone had ravaged the south of the country, causing a hundred thousand deaths. We were able to care for 75 orphans from the disaster area. The school has grown enormously since then.

As a foundation, we can now offer good housing and the right guidance and care to 300 girls and 50 boys every year. An exceptional situation occurred during the summer recess in 2023. As usual, many children who live permanently in our residential groups have gone home. At the same time, many parents who live in troubled areas brought their children to the school. When the children returned after the summer recess to start the next school year, our residential groups became overcrowded. Since June 2023, we have offered shelter to no fewer than 437 girls and 50 boys.

Our boys live in the building below. It was renovated on the inside in 2022. In 2023, the water supply was improved and new fans were installed. We call this residential group The Hostel.



The 437 girls live in two buildings on the south side of the site. In between there is a former house, where we started caring for orphans in May 2008. The kitchen is located behind this house. There has been no sleeping in this building in recent years.





Due to the large number of girls, this former house was cleaned in May 2023 and put back into use as a sleeping area. We call the three buildings together The Golden House. The children themselves came up with this name for this living group in 2008.



The population of The Golden House and The Hostel consists on the one hand of children and young people from one of the 135 ethnic groups in Myanmar and on the other hand of underprivileged children and young people from the city and the immediate surroundings. The Golden House Family is a close-knit and dynamic community on the compound.

Cooking three meals a day for the almost 500 children and young people in our residential groups and the 700 novices is a huge task. Large rice cookers and large pans were purchased for this purpose. Seven older girls take turns helping our cook Yi. The meals are expensive and often consist only of rice, beans and vegetables. Sometimes local people come to prepare a nutritious meal. As a foundation, we ensure that the children regularly receive fruit.



Project objectives

We focus as a foundation on four concrete objectives:

1. Improving living conditions;
2. Investing in staff and teachers;
3. Renovation and maintenance of housing;
4. Facilitating the English & Life Skills Program (Bridging).

1. Improving living conditions

Since the start of our project in 2008, we have made many improvements to the living conditions of the children. Items such as healthy food, clothing, sleeping equipment, school supplies and toiletries require an annual investment from our foundation. The money we need for this is partly raised by our private sponsors. The sponsor parents and the sponsored children can maintain contact by e-mail. That's fun for both parties.



FRIENDSHIFTS

Let kids support kids

Together with our partner, the FriendShifts Foundation, we are breathing new life into the child sponsorship program. It will have a different design and will be made more accessible and personal.

We find this form of sponsorship important, because it provides important contacts. The FriendShifts Foundation also organizes contact between students in Myanmar and students from schools in the Netherlands and France. Small sponsorship campaigns are set up in collaboration with schools. With the proceeds, the residential groups will continue to be assured of basic facilities in the future.

2. Investing in staff and teachers

As a foundation you can only function well if you can rely on the school management, staff and teachers on site. We are fortunate that this collaboration has been excellent for fifteen years. The girls and boys of The Golden House and The Hostel are under the inspiring leadership of Yi Mon (r), Cho Cho (l) and Nyein Chan (m).



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They are helped by a large number of junior staff members. Together they provide the necessary structure and regularity. The staff members and junior staff members cook for the children and help with their studies. Without them our project would not function. The photo below shows the twelve girls who were junior staff members until the summer break. Due to the large number of children and young people living in our residential groups since the summer recess, the group of junior staff members has been expanded to eighteen girls.



Every year we also invest in staff training with the support of our sponsors. Young people who choose to become a junior staff member at The Golden House or The Hostel after their final exams will then receive further training in the field of leadership, responsibility, communication, empowerment and children's rights. In this way we create involvement and responsibility. The young people also participate in our English & Life Skills Program. When the young adults eventually find a job in or out of school, or when they get into a relationship, they leave The Golden House. You could call that a shame about the investment, but that is precisely what we are here to do: guide these young people to an independent existence.

3. Renewing and maintaining housing

We have undertaken the following in the field of maintenance and new construction:

Installation of solar panels

Since the military coup in February 2021, the electricity supply in Myanmar has been deteriorating. There was already a significant power shortage in the major cities. In addition, the military disconnects the power grid every day in order to have more power over the population and their activities. Currently, neighborhoods in the city of Mandalay have electricity for about four hours a day. This resulted in an unworkable situation at the PDO High School.

If the 1,400 children and young people who live permanently on the site want to wash every day, there must be sufficient water available. The groundwater sources are there, but if there is no electricity, the basins cannot be filled with water. There is also no water pressure in the showers and toilets. The climate in Myanmar is tropical and most of the year it is between 30 and 35 degrees. This means drinking a lot of water. The Golden House has its own groundwater treatment plant, but electricity is required to operate it. In Myanmar it is dark for an average of 11 hours a day. Without electricity there is no light and you cannot study in the evening. The problems became so acute that we decided to invest in solar panels. These were placed on the roof of one of our buildings in the spring of 2023. The daily routine has now returned to normal.





Rebuild House 1

In the future we would like to rebuild House 1. Our project started fifteen years ago with the purchase of this house. It is now used temporarily for sleeping. We would like to eventually replace the building with a large kitchen, work space, office space and dormitory.



4. Facilitating the English & Life Skills Program

In 2014 we developed plans to start a small-scale training institute for good English education at the school. This was called the Bridging Program. A modern classroom was furnished with the support of Wilde Ganzen.

English lessons

Every year, around 150 young people and young adults take English lessons every day. Most of them have finished high school. Young people from The Golden House, The Hostel and other residential groups also participate in the program. A large part of the students consists of teachers and staff from PDO High School and beyond.



Bridging gives a positive boost to English education throughout the school. Our well-trained local teachers provide the lessons. Teaching takes place at three levels and there are preparatory classes. We use the Cambridge method for language lessons and there are examinations. Inspiring educational events are also organized, such as a debate competition and a Retreat Program.

Before the military coup, the demand for young people who speak good English was high in tourism and business. That has now decreased a lot. But in other sectors, such as retail and education, demand is still as high as ever. With the certificates in your pocket, the chance of a better job is much greater. About 25 Bridging students are also selected every year for the Pre College Program at PDO High School. These young adults receive full-time lessons for a year in all kinds of subjects that are useful during an international exchange. They also receive help with applying for a scholarship.

Personal development training

In addition to the pillar of good English education, Bridging has a second pillar: Various training courses are provided throughout the year that are valuable for the personal development of the young adults. In the Netherlands it is very normal that you develop talents at school, work on self-confidence, learn to think critically, learn to express yourself well, as well as develop a sense of responsibility and ownership. In Myanmar this is not self-evident.



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Young people who have finished secondary school do not have these skills and encounter these shortcomings during their further studies and work. The intensive training courses we provide are very popular among young people. We meet an enormous need and receive full support from the management of the school, because they see personal growth among the students. Our English & Life Skills Program is a good breeding ground. Two five-month training courses took place in 2023, with many inspiring activities.



English lessons for middle school students

For several years now, the middle school students of The Golden House and The Hostel have been taking extra English lessons. The reason is that these students ultimately come across textbooks written in English in grades 10, 11 and 12. To increase the success rate and their chances in the future, they receive one hour of tutoring every day. This happens on three levels. The lessons are provided by teachers from our English & Life Skills Program. The financing comes partly from the Eekhoorn Foundation.



Trauma processing

Since the military coup, violence in rural areas has increased dramatically. The military is conducting a true reign of terror and the resistance is also making itself felt. This causes a lot of fear and personal suffering in the families. Parents look for a safe haven for their children. The PDO High School is such a relatively safe haven. But this does not yet mean that the traumas suffered have been processed. Our staff therefore organizes weekends together with the teachers of our English & Life Skills Program for children and young people who are living with unresolved trauma. We do this with the support of the FriendShifts Foundation. If additional psychological help is needed for some people afterwards, we will also offer that.



Exchange program

In 2023, as part of the 'Learning Together' project of the FriendShifts Foundation, an exchange took place between students from schools in the Netherlands and France on the one hand and students from the English & Life Skills Program on the other. This happened via letters and during online meetings.

Financing the program

Since 2016, the Marcus Foundation from the Netherlands has been willing to provide structural financial support to the project. In 2023 we also received support from other donors.

Our sponsorship activities

The year 2023 was slightly less successful in terms of sponsorship than previous years. There are two reasons for this.





On the one hand, Myanmar has been in the news negatively for more than six years. This makes it difficult to find schools in the Netherlands willing to set up sponsorship campaigns. On the other hand, the corona crisis and the wars in Europe have shifted the focus of supporting people in need from developing countries to Europe. That makes sense. Fortunately, as a foundation we have a number of loyal donors and sponsors, who are well informed about our work and how their money is spent locally. A brief overview:

Income:

Child sponsors and donations	€ 5,542
Bank interest	€ 641
Foundations and funds	€ 30,177
Donations for emergency fund	€ 3,656

Total	€ 40,016

Expenditure:

Food, personal care	€ 7,535
Additional staff salary + English lessons	€ 6,590
English & Life Skills Program + Trainings	€ 9,534
Household items	€ 2,362
Staff costs	€ 811
Building maintenance	€ 2,372
Overhead costs	€ 913
Emergency aid	€ 3,358
Expenses from reserve fund	€ 946

Total	€ 34,421

As a foundation, we are always looking for new donors and sponsors. We are happy with a one-time gift or an annual donation. Structural sponsorship of a child is also possible. But we are also very helped with valuable contacts for project applications and sponsorship campaigns.

Our method

There is plenty of work to be done for the World Child Care foundation in the coming years. We can do this thanks to the support of child sponsors and private donors on the one hand

and schools, churches, foundations and organizations on the other. It is good to know that we spend 98% of your sponsorship money on site. Because Our foundation is run by enthusiastic volunteers, we do Not have any salary costs, no travel costs and hardly any overhead costs. We try to keep it as transparent as possible for you. Every euro donated is 98 cents on location. By spending the raised sponsorship money locally, we not only help the children, but we also stimulate local entrepreneurs. We never take (used) materials or items with us, but purchase everything on site. The school only works with local companies that are not government-related. Thank you in advance for your support and interest in 2024.

Our belief

We cannot change the world, but on a small scale we can mean a lot to each other. **“The meaning of our lives lies in the difference we make in the lives of others,”** said Nelson Mandela. That is our belief, our wish and our good intention for the new year. We wish you and all our other donors, sponsors and all others a healthy, inspiring and peaceful 2024!



BECOME A DONOR TOO

As a foundation, we depend on one-off and structural donations from individuals, foundations, organizations and companies. Any contribution, small or large, is welcome!

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