



## Dear donors and sponsors...

We start this annual report of our project with a summary of the current situation in Myanmar. Part of the text comes from an article that journalist, writer and Myanmar expert Minka Nijhuis wrote in March 2024 for MO\*. This is a non-profit media project that brings courageous, human and global stories. We have supplemented our report with recent developments. It is anything but a happy story, but it must be told and shows that our help is needed more than ever.



## Civil War or Popular Uprising?

Myanmar is a patchwork of ethnic minorities and has a history of conflict. But the armed struggle that has erupted since the military coup of February 2021 is anything but a civil war. It is a popular uprising! Old and new resistance groups are fighting - partly united - against one common enemy: the Myanmar army, which violently suppresses all protests.

## Back in time

Myanmar suffered under a military dictatorship for almost fifty years. Periods of ceasefire and war alternated regularly. Until 2010, when political reforms began and Myanmar came under the leadership of a partly civilian government of ex-military personnel. After the elections of 2015, a democratically elected government took office, led by Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

However, the three most powerful ministries remained under the control of the military. Relations with minorities remained tense. Nevertheless, Myanmar experienced a period of fragile freedom until the coup in 2021.

## The power of working together

The new civilian militias largely consist of members of the Burmese majority from Central Myanmar. They receive training from ethnic minorities who have been fighting for autonomy and freedom for a long time. This despite a complex and fraught past. With little outside support, the militias have become more professional and coordination has improved. For the first time in Myanmar's history, almost the entire population is in revolt at the same time and with so many people.

The junta has now lost control in an increasingly large part of the country. In December, an important victory was reported in the west of the country. The 270 km long border with Bangladesh is now completely under the control of the Arakan Army. The junta has a shortage of troops because it has to fight on too many fronts at the same time. That is why conscription was reintroduced in February 2024. But many young adults refuse to fight against their own people.

## Humanitarian disaster

The United Nations estimates that there are 2.6 million displaced people in Myanmar, of whom 2.3 million have fled since the coup, with tens of thousands seeking safety in neighbouring countries.



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In the countryside, there is little aid, as the junta is blocking supplies. Supplies are arriving in small doses via alternative routes. Civilians are staying in makeshift shelters all over the region.



Fear of airstrikes prevents people from returning home. The military continues to sow death and destruction from the air with bombers, attack helicopters, artillery and drones. Villages, hospitals and schools are being bombed all over the country as punishment for supporting the uprising. China and Russia are the main suppliers of weapons. The price of resistance is high. Health care and education have collapsed and food prices have skyrocketed. The World Food Programme (WFP) reports that a third of the population needs humanitarian aid.

According to official figures, the junta has already killed 4,400 civilians since the coup, but the real number is many times higher. For decades, the junta has operated with total impunity. One silver lining is that in November the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Myanmar's military leader, Min Aung Hlaing, for crimes against humanity committed against Rohingya Muslims since 2017. But it remains to be seen whether he and his fellow generals will ever be brought to justice.

## Federal government

Throughout the country, the resistance groups are trying to establish a new state. They are under the command of the

Government of National Unity (NUG). This government was established by a group of deposed representatives and their supporters, after Aung San Suu Kyi and her colleagues were imprisoned by the military. The NUG consists of 17 ministries, which are spread across the country. Some operate from the states, others from neighboring countries or from the West. The new president Duwa Lashi La is staying in a liberated area in the north of Myanmar.

The NUG is hardly known internationally. There are representatives in the West, but without official diplomatic status. The NUG receives modest advice and training from Western organizations and experts. The main source of income is the sale of real estate, which the military appropriated.



A federal state will be difficult to achieve in practice. Older politicians from Aung San Suu Kyi's party consider themselves the most important leaders and show little willingness to cooperate and engage in democratic consultation. In the past, many young people and ethnic minorities have lost confidence in Aung San Suu Kyi's party for this reason.

'Winning is the easiest part of the battle. The hardest time comes after that', says an activist in Minka Nijhuis' article. He fears division, a lack of democratic institutions and a lack of credible leadership. 'We have to prepare for this now. We are already late.'





## Poverty spiral

The military coup and popular uprising have caused the country to spiral into poverty. Factories and shops were forced to close their doors, hotels and restaurants had no more guests, rural people were no longer allowed to trade their agricultural products in the city, and so on. Many of the day laborers in Myanmar have had hardly any income in the past four years. Theft is currently the order of the day. Support from international aid organizations is under pressure. The military controls the trade routes, the money flows, the energy supply and the internet. The population has been left to its fate. In short: Forgotten people in a forgotten country!

## Bright spots

Fortunately, there is not only misery in Myanmar, but we also see bright spots. We see enormous resilience, survival instinct and willingness to help among the population. And although many government schools have been closed because the teachers do not want to work under a military regime, many monastery schools are taking their responsibility and continuing to educate the youth. Many citizen initiatives have also emerged to offer children some education.

A school that is 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 sixteen years. At this Buddhist monastery school, 8,500 children and young people receive free education from over 300 teachers every day.



About 1,400 students live permanently on the school grounds. 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. Three meals a day are cooked for this group, but since the coup also for the 300 youngest novices. Previously, they would go through the streets with their rice bowl to collect food, but due to the poverty among the population this is no longer possible.



## Financial problems

During the corona crisis, PDO High School got into financial trouble and the deficits have become even bigger since the military junta came to power. The school management has the greatest difficulty in getting the school operation around, because local and international support has decreased. Because inflation has increased by 400 percent, the teachers and staff members only receive a part of their original salary. Many teachers therefore try to obtain a scholarship and leave for abroad. We were also confronted again with some distressing cases in the private sphere of our staff members, teachers and students. Fortunately, we were able to help with money that was donated especially for these cases.

The school is under strict military surveillance. Spies monitor everything: the curriculum, the exams, the business operations, the finances, the money flows and the communication.



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The military are not happy that the school receives many donations from foreign aid organizations. They are afraid that this will support the rebellion of the rebel armies. Fortunately, 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 four years, he has aged ten years, according to those directly involved. Yet he has no intention of stopping his ideological and educational work. We repeat his words from last year: "The youth are the future. Peace and freedom are only one generation away from us. That is the generation that is now going to school!"



## Our role and position

These powerful words from U Nayaka encourage us to continue our work. Despite all the troubles, as a foundation we continue to focus on the projects at the PDO High School. Working visits have not been possible for a while, but we have intensive online contact with the teachers, staff members and school management. The school has no government involvement and as a foundation we keep our distance from politics and the regime. The school plays an important regional role and is therefore a good place to invest. We do this in better housing, living and study conditions for the children and in future prospects. Young people who have finished their secondary school can participate in the English & Life Skill Program that we support.

## The Golden House

Our support for the school began 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, resulting in a hundred thousand deaths. We were able to accommodate 75 orphans from the disaster area. The school has grown enormously since then.

Sixteen years later, as a foundation, we can offer good housing and the right guidance and care to a maximum of 500 girls and boys. At the end of March, at the end of the 2023-2024 school year, 445 girls were living in The Golden House and 46 boys in The Hostel. At the moment, 347 girls are living in The Golden House and 41 boys in The Hostel. The number is smaller than last school year, because a number of children and young people were able to return to their liberated regions. At the same time, the fighting between the rebel army and the junta is increasingly taking place around large cities, and it is therefore also becoming less safe in the city of Mandalay.

Our boys live in the building below. In 2023, the water supply was improved and new fans were installed. In 2024, the building got a new roof. We call this residential group The Hostel.



Our girls live in two buildings on the south side of the site. In between them is a former house, where we started taking care of orphans in May 2008. Behind this house is the kitchen. In recent years, this building has not been used for sleeping.





Due to the large number of girls, this former residential building was forced to be used as a sleeping area again in the 2023-2024 school year. The three buildings together are called The Golden House. The name for this residential group was thought up by the children themselves in 2008.



The population of The Golden House and The Hostel consists of children and young people from one of the 135 ethnic groups in Myanmar and disadvantaged children and young people from the city and its immediate surroundings. The Golden House Family is a close and dynamic community on the school grounds.

Cooking three meals a day for the 400 children and young people in our residential groups and the 300 youngest novices is a huge task. Large rice cookers and large pans have been 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

As a foundation, we focus on four specific objectives:

1. Improving living conditions;
2. Investing in staff and teachers;
3. Renewing and maintaining housing;
4. Facilitating the English & Life Skill Program (Bridging).

### 1. Improving living conditions

Our project started in 2008. Since then, we have made many improvements to the living conditions of the children. Things like healthy food, clothing, sleeping gear, 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 keep in touch by e-mail. That is nice for the children and the parents.



Together with our partner the FriendShifts Foundation we organize an exchange program between students in Myanmar and students from schools in the Netherlands and France.

Letters, videos and drawings are made back and forth and there are regular online meetings. Friendshifts sets up small sponsorship campaigns in collaboration with the 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 members and teachers on site. We are fortunate that this collaboration has been excellent for sixteen years. The girls and boys of The Golden House and The Hostel are under the inspiring leadership of three staff members. Yi Mon has the daily management, checks hygiene, school activities and absences and holds discussions with the junior staff members and vulnerable girls.



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Cho Cho (l) also has the daily management and encourages the girls in carrying out the agreed tasks. Together with Yi Mon (r) she has conversations with the junior staff members. Nyein Chan (m) has the daily management of The Hostel and has the same tasks as Yi Mon and Cho Cho. He is also responsible for the maintenance of our living groups. Then of course we have Yi, the cook, who was mentioned earlier and is not in the picture.



Our staff is supported by a number of junior staff members. Together they provide the necessary structure and regularity. They cook for the children and help them with their studies. Without our staff, our project would not function.

Every year, with the support of our sponsors, we also invest in staff training. Young people who choose to become junior staff members at The Golden House after their final exams are trained in the areas of leadership, self-reflection, collaboration, communication and empowerment. This creates involvement and responsibility. Below is a photo of the girls who were junior staff members until the summer recess.



The next photo shows the girls who are currently junior staff members and are each the spokesperson for a dormitory.



These young people also participate in our English & Life Skill Program. If the young adults eventually find a job at or outside the school, or if they get into a relationship, they leave The Golden House. You could call that a waste of investment, but that is exactly what we are about: leading these young people to an independent existence.

### 3. Renovation and maintenance of housing

In the area of maintenance and new construction, we have undertaken the following:

#### New water pump

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 daily in order to have more power over the population and their activities. That is why we installed solar panels in 2023

Since the beginning of 2024, the military has also disconnected the drinking water supply to the schools and important public buildings. Fortunately, the PDO High School has access to a number of groundwater sources. The pump at the source of The Golden House did not have sufficient capacity, so we installed a more powerful pump.





### Rebuilding House 1

In the future, we would like to rebuild House 1. Our project started sixteen years ago when we bought this house. It was temporarily used for sleeping again last school year. We would like to replace it with a large kitchen, work-space, office and dormitory in the long term.



### **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 given the name Bridging Program. With the support of Wilde Ganzen, a modern classroom was set up.

### English lessons

The English lessons are attended annually by approximately 150 young people and young adults. Most of them have finished secondary school. Young people from The Golden House, The Hostel and other residential groups also participate in the program. Some of the students consist of teachers and staff members from the PDO High School and beyond.



The lessons are provided by our well-trained local teachers.

There are three levels of teaching and preparatory classes. We use the Cambridge method for language lessons and there are examinations. Bridging gives a positive boost to English education throughout the school. Inspirational events are also organized in the areas of debating, environmental awareness and community service.



Before the military coup, there was a great demand for young people who speak good English in tourism and business. That has now decreased considerably. But in other sectors, such as retail and education, the demand is still high. With the certificates in hand, the chance of a better job is much greater. In addition, around 25 Bridging students are selected each 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 for an international exchange. In addition, they receive help in applying for a scholarship.

### Training for personal development

In addition to the pillar of good English education, Bridging has a second pillar, namely training that is valuable for the personal development of 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, learn to reflect on yourself, as well as develop a sense of responsibility and ownership. In Myanmar, that is not self-evident.



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When young people in Myanmar finish secondary school, they do not have these skills and they encounter all kinds of shortcomings during their further studies and work. The intensive training courses that we provide are very popular with the young people. We meet an enormous need with this and receive full support from the school management. Our English & Life Skill Program is a good breeding ground. In 2024, two English & Life Skill trainings of five months will have taken place, with many activities.



## English lessons for middle school students

The middle school students of The Golden House and The Hostel have been taking extra English lessons for four years. The reason is that these students will eventually have to deal with textbooks that are written in English in years 10, 11 and 12. In order to increase the pass rate and their chances in the future, they receive one hour of extra lessons every day. This is done at three levels. The lessons are given by teachers from our English & Life Skills Program. The financing comes partly from other foundations.



## The teachers

The lessons and trainings are provided by our local teaching team.



The team consists from left to right of:

- Yi Mon | Meta-skills
- Shwe Yee Oo | English
- Aye Sandar | English
- Nann Myint (manager) | Self-awareness & Inner-growth



## Financing the programme

Since 2016, the Marcus Foundation from the Netherlands has been prepared to provide structural financial support to the project. In recent years it has been processed via Ars Donandi.

## Our sponsorship activities

The last few years have been slightly less successful in terms of sponsorship activities than those before. There are two reasons for this. On the one hand, Myanmar has been in





the news negatively for over seven 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 support 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	€ 3,217
General donations	€ 475
Bank interest	€ 95
Foundations and funds	€ 26,560
Emergency fund donations	€ 1,995
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<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 32,342</b>

#### Expenditure:

Food and personal care	€ 7,000
Additional staff salary + English lessons	€ 8,378
English & Life Skill Program + Training	€ 15,976
Household items	€ 400
Staff costs	€ 1,244
Building maintenance	€ 1,468
Overhead costs	€ 1,152
Reserve fund expenditure	€ 3,750
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<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 39,368</b>

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 working method**

For the World Child Care foundation, there is plenty of work to be done 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 organisations

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 have no salary costs, no travel costs and hardly any overhead costs. In this way, we try to keep it as transparent as possible for you. Every euro donated is 98 cents on site. By spending the collected sponsorship money on site, we not only help the children, but 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 connected to the government. Thank you in advance for your support and interest in 2025.

#### **Our conviction**

'Anne, the world is not beautiful, but you can colour it a little more beautiful', sang Herman van Veen. And that applies to each of us. We cannot change the world, but on a small scale we can mean a lot to each other. And no, we cannot help everyone, but everyone can help someone. That is our belief, our wish and our good intention for the new year. We wish you and all our other donors, sponsors and interested parties a healthy, inspiring and peaceful 2025!

### 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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