



## Dear donors and sponsors...

While the effects of the corona crisis are easing, the effects of the military coup are only increasing in Myanmar. In this overview you can read what this means for the country, the people and our projects.

### The corona crisis

In the autumn of 2021, the population was severely affected by the second corona wave. In the past year, we saw a peak in February and a small rebound in September. The situation is now like in Europe: corona is still present, but to a mild degree. According to official figures from the WHO, about 640,000 people in Myanmar have been infected since the start of the corona crisis. About 19,500 people are said to have died. This only concerns the registered cases.



In reality, the infection and death rates are many times higher. The vaccination campaign only started in 2021 and that was much too late. Meanwhile, 63.5% of the population has been vaccinated once and 50% is fully vaccinated. About 60 million people live in Myanmar. It is estimated that three-quarters of them have had corona and that the death rates are at least ten times higher. We'll probably never know for sure. What we do know for sure is that the crisis has had a huge impact on social life, employment, education, health-care and economic conditions in the country. More on that later.

### The military coup

The other crisis in Myanmar is caused by the military coup, which took place on February 1, 2021. President Win Myint, state adviser Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior members of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party were detained by the military leadership. Immediately after the coup, massive protests arose, which continued to swell in the weeks that followed. Hundreds of thousands of protesters demanded the release of their leaders and the restoration of civilian rule.

Myanmar was a military dictatorship from 1962 to 2011. A civilian government then returned, led by Aung San Suu Kyi. This Nobel Prize winner had been committed to democratization since the late 1980s and had spent years under house arrest. However, the army continued to have a big finger in the pie and seized power again in 2021.



The army cracked down on the demonstrators in the spring of 2021. International news agencies reported, based on local witnesses, that soldiers fired live ammunition at the demonstrators. The number of dead is estimated at two thousand and tens of thousands of people have been arrested.



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The Tatmadaw, as the armed forces in Myanmar are known, declared that it seized power and declared a state of emergency over widespread concerns about alleged fraud during the November 2020 elections. State adviser Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint have since sentenced to several long prison terms.

The largely peaceful demonstrations and civil disobedience campaigns have turned into armed resistance in the past year. That resistance consists of about 250 loosely organized local defense groups, urban resistance cells and ethnic armed organizations, which together have about 50,000 members.

The junta strikes back mercilessly and conducts a reign of terror all over the countryside. Villages are burned and looted, people are threatened and tortured, and people flee. There are also attacks on schools, because insurgents are said to be hiding there.

Due to the violence of war, millions of children and young people in Myanmar cannot go to school. In areas where resistance groups rule the roost, people are diligently working on their own education system.



All these events create a violent downward spiral, with insurgents intensifying their resistance, while the authorities respond with even harsher repression. There is currently no prospect of improvement or peace.

## Spiral of poverty

The double crisis has caused a lot of suffering in Myanmar. The country has been pushed back into the spiral of poverty. International companies have withdrawn, orders for factories have been cancelled, businesses and shops were forced to close their doors, hotels and restaurants no longer had guests, rural people were no longer allowed to trade their agricultural products in the city and so on. Many of Myanmar's day laborers have barely had any income in the past two years. Theft is currently the order of the day. International aid was still being provided in 2020, but since the military coup in early 2021, this is no longer the case. The population has been left to fend for itself.

## Bright spots

Is there only misery in Myanmar? No, fortunately not! There are also bright spots. Fortunately, most schools in Myanmar were able to reopen their doors in June 2022 after two years of lockdown. This includes the Phaung Daw Oo High School in the city of Mandalay. That is the school that we have been supporting with our foundation for fourteen years.



At this Buddhist monastery school, 7,500 children and young people receive free education from over 300 teachers every day. About 1,200 students live permanently on the school grounds. These are 200 older girls, 700 novices (young monks)





and 300 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.

Until June 2022, the situation looked completely different. During the lockdown, only 150 novices and 150 underprivileged children and young people lived on the school grounds, as well as about 50 staff members and teachers. During the lockdown, The Golden House cooked daily for the novices.



During this period, the PDO High School ran into financial problems. In 2021 and the first half of 2022, the school management was no longer able to pay the salaries of employees sitting at home. As a result, we were confronted with some harrowing private situations of our staff members, teachers and students. Fortunately, as a foundation, we were able to help with money that was donated especially for these cases.

### Our position

Despite all the troubles in Myanmar, we as a foundation continue to focus on the projects at the PDO High School and we try to do that as well as possible. Working visits are not possible at the moment, but we are in close contact with the teachers, staff members and school management. The school has no government involvement and as a foundation we keep ourselves aloof from politics and the regime.

In recent years, head monk and principal U Nayaka has campaigned with a committee of monks for radical educational innovations. These innovations have now been imple-

mented by the Ministry of Education. These changes were much needed!

An internationally supported project group is housed on the school grounds, which is committed to improving education at monastic schools in Myanmar. The approach is aimed at changing the mindset of principals, teachers, students and parents. Good quality primary education is being developed that is accessible to everyone and a large e-learning network has been set up.



The PDO High School plays an important regional role. It is therefore a good place to invest.

We do this as a foundation in good housing, living and study conditions for the children, in further education and in offering future prospects for young people. The young people who have finished their secondary school can participate in the English & Life Skill Program (Bridging) supported by us. More on that later.

### The GoldenHouse

Our support for the school started in May 2008 with the purchase of two houses on the edge of the school grounds. At the time, a cyclone had hit the south of the country, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths. We were able to take care of 75 orphans from the disaster area. The school has grown tremendously since then.



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As a foundation, we can now provide good housing and proper care to a maximum of 320 girls and 80 boys every year. Our boys normally live in a building on the north side of the site. We call this accommodation The Hostel. During the corona crisis, this building was used as a quarantine center and now serves as an annex of the school clinic. Below you can see the building where our 50 boys live this school year. It has recently been completely refurbished on the inside.



The 314 girls live in two buildings on the south side of the site. We call this living group The Golden House. The children came up with this name themselves in 2008.



During a normal school year, about half of the population of The Golden House and The Hostel come from one of Myanmar's 135 ethnic minorities. They live in the provinces

around Mandalay. But because the country is currently at war it is not safe for the children and young people from the provinces to come to the big city.

The population for the 2022-2023 school year therefore mainly consists of underprivileged children and young people from the city and the immediate vicinity. The Golden House Family is a close-knit and dynamic community on the school grounds.

## Project objectives

As a foundation, we focus on four concrete objectives:

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

### 1. Improving living conditions

Since the start of our project in 2008, we have greatly improved 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 largely raised by our private sponsors. The sponsor parents and the sponsored children can maintain contact by e-mail. That's good for both parties.



Together with our new partner, the FriendShifts Foundation, we will revive the child sponsorship program. It will be redesigned and made more accessible and personal. We think this form of sponsorship is important, because it creates great contacts. The FriendShifts Foundation organizes contact between students in Myanmar and students from schools in the Netherlands and France. Small sponsor campaigns are also set up and the proceeds will ensure that the entire residential group will continue to have basic facilities in the future.





## 2. Investing in staff and teachers

As a foundation you can only function properly if you can rely on the school management, staff members and teachers on site. We consider ourselves fortunate that this cooperation has been excellent for fourteen 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).



They are assisted by a 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 ten girls who are currently junior staff members.



Every year, with the support of our sponsors, we also invest in staff training. Young people who choose to become a junior staff member in The Golden House or The Hostel after their final exams are then trained in the field of leadership,

responsibility, communication, empowerment and children's rights. This creates involvement and responsibility. These young people also participate in our English & Life Skill Program.

When the young adults eventually find a good job in or out of school, or get into a relationship, they leave The Golden House. You could call that a pity about the investment, but that is precisely what we want to do: lead these young people to an independent existence.

### Own teachers

To ensure that the PDO High School can retain qualified staff and to ensure that more final exam candidates pass their exams, we have been paying the salaries of a number of teachers since 2018.

This has led to a higher success rate and to more structure and regularity in the young people's studies. We did not pay teachers' salaries in the first half of 2022, because there were no final exam candidates staying in our residential groups at that time.

## 3. Renewing and maintaining accommodation

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

### Painting the buildings

We had all the buildings of The Golden House residential group repainted inside and out.



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## Electricity network renovation

On page 5 of this report we mentioned that our boys are currently living in another accommodation on the school grounds. In that building, the electrical wiring, switches, sockets and fans urgently needed to be replaced. That has already happened.



## English lessons

Since the start of the 2022-2023 school year in June, about 150 young people have been taking English lessons every day. In addition to young people from The Golden House and The Hostel, young people from other residential groups also participate in the programme. This also applies to teachers and staff members of the PDO High School and beyond. Bridging gives a positive impulse to English education throughout the school. Our well-trained local teachers provide the lessons. There are three levels of teaching and there are preparatory classes. For the language lessons we use the Cambridge method and the young people take an official exam. Events are also organized.

## Rebuild House 1

In the future we would like to rebuild House 1. Our project started fourteen years ago with the purchase of this house. It is still used for cooking, but is no longer inhabited. We would like to replace the building in the long term with a large kitchen, workspace and office space.



## **4. Facilitating the English & Life Skill Program**

In 2014 we developed plans to start a small-scale training institute for good English education at the school. That was called the Bridging Program. With the support of Wilde Ganzen, a modern classroom was set up.

Before the military coup, the demand for young people who speak good English was high in tourism and business. That has now decreased quite a bit. But in other sectors, such as retail and education, demand is still as strong as ever. With the certificates in your pocket, the chance of a better job is much greater. Every year, about 25 Bridging students are also selected for the Pre College Program at the PDO High School. These young adults receive full-time lessons for a year in all kinds of subjects that come in handy 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





also has a second pillar: During the year, various training courses are given that are valuable for the personal development of the young adults. In the Netherlands it is quite 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.

The young people who have finished secondary school do not have these skills and encounter these shortcomings during their further studies and work. That is why we provide intensive training. They are very popular with the young people. With this we meet an enormous need and receive full support from the management of the school, because personal growth is seen in the young people. This is reflected in their work. Our English & Life Skill Program is a good breeding ground. Another training took place in December, in which 22 young people participated.

on the one hand and students from the Bridging program on the other. This was done through letters and during online meetings.



## Our sponsorship activities

The year 2022 was slightly less successful in terms of sponsorship activities than previous years. That has two reasons. On the one hand, Myanmar has been in the news negatively for more than five 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 war in Ukraine have shifted the focus of supporting people in need from developing countries to the Netherlands. That makes sense. Fortunately, as a foundation we have a number of loyal donors and sponsors, who are well aware of our work and how their money is spent locally.

### Funding the program

Since 2016, the Marcus Foundation from the Netherlands has been prepared to structurally support the project financially. In 2022 we also received support from the Friendshifts Foundation, the Eekhoorn Foundation and the River Sunset Foundation. In addition, money is used from sponsor campaigns in the Netherlands.

### Exchange program

In the fall of 2022, as part of the 'Learning Together' project of the Friendshifts Foundation, an exchange took place between students from schools in the Netherlands and France

### A brief overview:

- Our child sponsors provided a constant source of income.
- Dozens of private individuals made small and large donations in 2022.
- We received a one-off donation from the River Sunset Foundation. This foundation was active in Myanmar for many years and was discontinued in early 2022. The contribution is dedicated to board member Silvia van den Heuvel, who passed away in 2020.



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- We received one-off and annual donations from foundations, organizations and companies, such as the Care for Children Foundation, the Friendships Foundation, the Eekhoorn Foundation, the Frangipani Foundation, Molkenboer and Van der Kolk Advocaten, the Vincentius Association 's-Hertogenbosch and the Diaconie.
- The Marcus Foundation supported the Bridging Program for the eighth consecutive year and honored an additional request for staff costs.
- In 2022, we spent €8,000 on the English & Life Skill Program (Bridging). We transferred more than € 3,900 for salary and professionalization of the staff and paid € 750 in teachers' salary. In addition, we committed about € 2,200 in maintenance and the staff bought about € 6,900 in household items, school supplies, sleeping materials, clothing, slippers, toiletries and healthy additions to meals.

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, for example for an amount of € 10 per month.

But we are also very helped with valuable contacts for project applications and sponsorship campaigns. Think of a primary school, secondary school, foundation, Rotary or Lions Club, women's union, diaconate working group, Vincentius association, sports association or bank fund. Please get in touch!

## 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 100% of your sponsor money on site. Because our foundation is run by enthusiastic volunteers, we have no salary costs, no travel costs and hardly any overhead costs. The board itself bears the costs for the management of the foundation and the travel costs for the working visits, as secretary Nico Schoenmakers brought to the project in February 2020. We try to keep it as transparent

as possible for you. Every euro donated is a euro on location. By spending the collected sponsor money on site, we not only help the children, but we also stimulate local entrepreneurs. Because everything in Myanmar is relatively cheap, we never take (used) materials or stuff with us, but we purchase everything on the spot. The school itself only works with local companies that are not affiliated with the government. Thank you in advance for your support and interest in 2023.

## Our belief

In 2023 may your dreams be bigger than your fears and your actions louder than your words. **True friendship is based on closeness, solidarity and the willingness to share everything.** When you light a light for another, you also light your own path! That is our conviction, 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 2023!



**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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