



STICHTING CARE ♥ FOR CHILDREN

Annual Report 2023

Dear sponsors and donors...

When the Care for Children Foundation was founded in 2002, Myanmar had already been a military dictatorship for forty years. Most countries in the world did not have diplomatic relations with the country. 'Forgotten people in a forgotten country' would have been a good title for a documentary. In 2011, after fifty years of military oppression of the population, light appeared on the horizon for the first time. 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. The title 'Forgotten people in a forgotten country' is again more applicable 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 long-running 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 on 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, 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 the day labourers have had little income in the past three years.

Our position

Despite everything, as a foundation we continue to focus on our two orphanages in Minethouk and try to do this as best as possible. As a foundation, we have no government involvement and we keep aloof from politics. It is sometimes restless in and around the nearby city of Nyaung Shwe. More and more war refugees from the Kayen are arriving there.



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Bright spots

Is there only misery in Myanmar? No Fortunately not! In contrast to many regions in Myanmar, it is relatively quiet around Inle in central Myanmar. This also applies to the village of Minethouk, where our two orphanages are located. The government school there was open all year round in 2023, unlike many other government schools in Myanmar. This means that our 60 orphans could enjoy full education. Six girls and eight boys were able to participate in vocational internships. There were even opportunities for short excursions. More about that later. The children and staff have not been idle in 2023.

Composition of the group

A total of 60 orphans, semi-orphans and children from very poor families live in our orphanages.



All the children together in front of the boys' house.



Of the 36 girls in the girls' home, 15 are orphans and 14 are semi-orphans. The other 7 have both parents, but those parents cannot care for them.

Of the 24 boys in the boys' home, 8 are orphans and 12 are semi-orphans. The other 4 have both parents, but those parents cannot care for them.



The staff

As a foundation you can only function well if you can rely on the staff on site. We are fortunate that this collaboration is excellent. The girls and boys in the two orphanages form a warm and close-knit community. Everything is going well. There is discipline, but there is also time for fun. The children all have their tasks and help out well. The staff has for years consisted of:



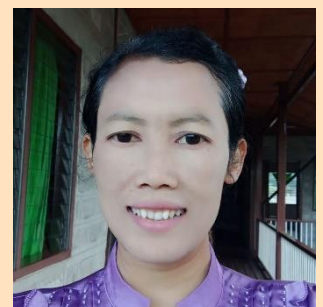
U Tet Tun
Orphanage father
and head of both houses



Daw Mya Sein
Cook for both houses



U Bran Saing
Staff member of the boys' home
Tasks: computer teacher,
supervision and health



Daw Nilar Aye
Staff member of the girls' home
Tasks: math teacher,
supervision, health and garden



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Project volunteers

Due to the corona crisis and military coup, we have not been able to welcome volunteers since 2020. That is a pity, because they make a valuable contribution to the ins and outs of the orphanages. Hopefully this will be possible again in the future.

The girls' house



To give you an idea of the girls' house and the surrounding area, we have added some nice photos to this annual overview.



The girls sleep in the dormitories on beds with wooden frames. A mosquito net protects them from mosquitoes at night.



The kitchen is located near the girls' house, where the meals for the girls and boys are cooked every day. The older girls take turns helping our cook Daw Mya Sein. It's fun.



Rice, meat, fish and oil are bought at the local market, but many vegetables and fruit come from the own vegetable garden. There is plenty of space around the houses to grow fruit and vegetables. Because the houses are located on the shore of Inle Lake, the soil is fertile. The children enjoy helping Daw Nilar Aye with the gardening. The girls' job is planting, weeding and harvesting.



The girls and boys all eat together in the communal dining room in the evening.

The boys' house



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The boys' house is within walking distance of the girls' house. In terms of construction, both houses are very similar. The building has a number of large rooms where the boys can study, use the computer, recreate and watch television.



All children have their own storage box with clothing and personal items in the dormitories.



The boys also have to help in the vegetable garden. Their tasks are digging, pulling weeds and watering plants.



Before eating there is a short moment of gratitude.

When the children go to government school, they wear a school uniform. This is common at all schools in Myanmar and helps ensure that everyone is equal and looks equally well-groomed. In the orphanages the children simply wear casual clothes.

Tutoring

The girls and boys receive daily tutoring in English, reading, mathematics and computer use, among other things.



Leisure activities and excursions



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There is also time for leisure activities. The girls and boys enjoy playing football, swimming, gymnastics, singing, drawing, playing computer games and watching television. Of course, the children's birthdays are also celebrated.



In 2023, the children took part in an educational youth project about nature and the environment.

Vocational training

Six girls and eight boys participated in vocational trainings in 2023. In the Netherlands we would call these professional internships. For two months the girls worked in a hair and beauty salon, a sewing workshop and a weaving workshop. Six boys worked for two months as cleaners and waiters in a hotel. Two boys have gained experience in a scooter workshop.



Maintenance of the buildings

As a foundation, we believe it is important that both orphanages and the outbuildings remain in good condition. That is why we invest in minor and major maintenance. Because major maintenance took place in 2022, no significant minor maintenance had to be carried out in 2023.

Future plans

Four older girls have started part-time university in the city of Nyaung Shwe. This study lasts four years. Two boys continued their Nationalities Youth Development studies in Sagaing. If more young people would like to go to part-time university, we as a foundation would like to facilitate this.



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On the previous page we told you about the vocational training, in which six girls and eight boys participated. We would like to offer young people in orphanages more of these types of vocational internships. Consider internships in sewing, clothing making, gardening and carpentry. In local workshops, young people learn skills that will lead them to an independent existence. It is also important that the children become digitally literate. Each house has a computer lab. As a foundation, we regularly purchase new laptops. U Bran Saing provides the computer lessons.

In Memoriam: Simon Goede

On May 3, 2023, Simon Goede, the former secretary of the Care for Children Foundation, died at the age of 87. After the death of Cor Visser, who started the foundation in 2002, Simon worked with tireless energy for the two orphanages in Minethouk for years. Simon was involved with heart and soul and even after his retirement as secretary he was a good advisor to the new board.

Governance & Synergy

At the beginning of 2020, we have informed you of the change in board at the Care for Children Foundation. The new board members also support another foundation that is active in Myanmar, namely the World Child Care foundation. Both foundations function side by side. The current board consists of the following people:



Lucas Harms
Chairman



Nico Schoenmakers
Secretary



Camiel v.d. Heiden
Treasurer

The World Child Care Foundation has been active in the large city of Mandalay in Myanmar for 15 years. The foundation supports the Phaung Daw Oo High School. That is a huge Buddhist monastery school, where normally 8,500 children from poor families receive free education, from kindergarten to secondary school.

The foundation supervises two residential groups with a total of 500 girls and boys on the school grounds and has set up an English & Life Skills Program for young people who have completed their secondary school.



The collaboration offers future prospects for the young people in the orphanages in Minethouk. If the threat of war diminishes, the World Child Care Foundation can allow a number of young people to participate in the aforementioned English & Life Skills Program in Mandalay every year. The young people learn to speak English well, obtain a Cambridge certificate and participate in training in the areas of self-confidence, self-knowledge, critical thinking, debating, communication, active citizenship and environmental awareness.

The demand for talented and good English-speaking young people is high in education, healthcare, retail and ICT. With the certificates in your pocket, the chance of a better job and an independent existence is much greater. The Care for Children Foundation provided modest support to the World Child Care Foundation three times in 2020, 2021 and 2202 to create a study and workplace in Mandalay for a number of young people from Minethouk. It is good to know that this was approved by the old board during the period when both foundations started working together. As soon as possible, a number of young people from Minethouk will study in Mandalay.

Financial situation in 2023

It is becoming increasingly difficult to transfer money to Myanmar without military intervention. The military is not happy that schools and orphanages receive donations from foreign NGOs. They fear that this will support the uprising of the rebel armies. Fortunately, we were able to transfer money to the Thai bank account of the PDO High School in Mandalay in 2023. The school then transferred it for us to the account of the Care for Children orphanages.



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Income:

- The Care for Child-ren foundation received an amount of € 3,575 from the regular sponsors.
- € 5,550 was received in individual donations.
- Due to the lockdown and the war, local income from tourists was nil.
- No subsidy was received from the local Social Welfare Department in 2023.
- The interest on our bank accounts amounted to € 639.
- This brought the total income to € 9,764.



Expenditure:

- The annual local costs for the two orphanages, salaries, necessities and education amounted to € 24,514.
- Overhead costs amounted to € 811.
- This brought the total expenditure to € 25,325.

Difference:

- The difference between income and expenditure in 2023 was € 15,561. This amount was paid from the foundation's equity.

Website Care for Children

The foundation's new website went live in May 2023. A professional appearance is important for trust.



Our method

There is plenty of work to be done for our foundation in the coming years. We can do this thanks to the support of our regular sponsors on the one hand and our loyal donors on the other. It is good to know that we spend 97% of your contribution on site. Because our foundation is run by enthusiastic volunteers, we have no 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 worth no less than 97 cents on location. By spending the raised sponsorship money locally, we not only help the children, but we also stimulate local entrepreneurs. Because everything in Myanmar is relatively cheap, we purchase everything locally. The local staff 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 interested parties a healthy, inspiring and peaceful 2024!

Care for Children Foundation

- C** Nico Schoenmakers (secretary)
- A** Post address: Brabanthoeven 73
5244 HJ Rosmalen, The Netherlands
- M** +31 6 10 30 69 83
- E** info@careforchildren.nu
- W** www.careforchildren.nu
- B** NL64 RABO 0383 5730 84 of NL39 INGB 0009 3905 67

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As a foundation, we depend on donations from private individuals, foundations, organizations and companies. Every contribution, large or small, is welcome!

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