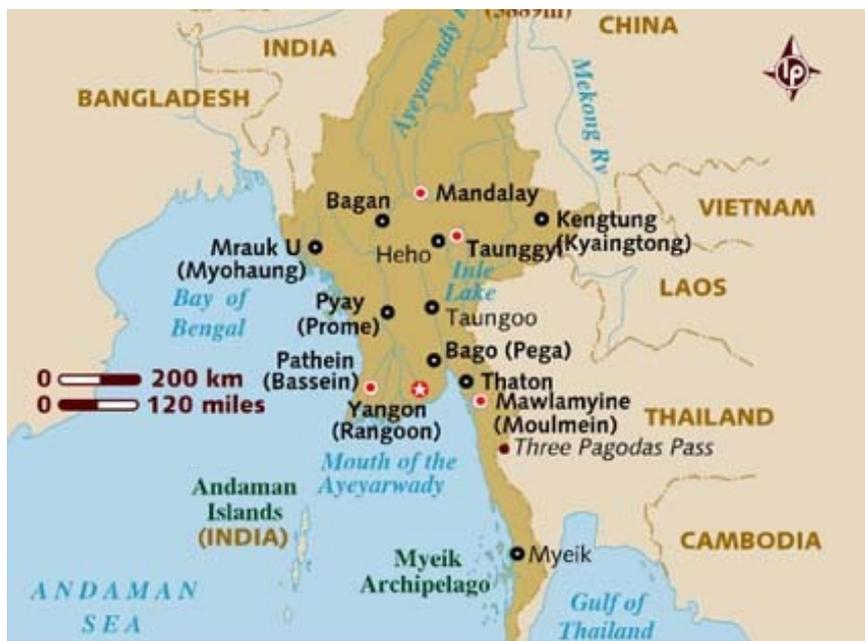


Spotlight on Myanmar

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a south-east Asian nation comprising of more than 100 ethnic groups. Previously known as Burma (since the 19th Century), Burma gained independence from Britain in 1948 and is almost the size of New South Wales. Its population is 54 million. The largest city is Yangon (formerly Rangoon), the second largest city is Mandalay, 600 km north of Yangon.



While English is not widely used throughout the country it is being studied by young people in schools in the cities. The common language used for communication nationally is Burmese.

The St Vincent de Paul Society was established in Myanmar in 1883, with the National Council being instituted in 1978. Most of the Society's conferences are from about 200 km south of Yangon to the highlands in the far north of the country, approaching the border with India.

Myanmar is twinned with Australia as its sole donor, and currently there are 83 active twinning relationships with Australian conferences, mostly located in Victoria. The Myanmar National Council is going through a process of aggregating conferences and there are a number of conferences in Myanmar available to be twinned with Australian conferences.

Ozanam Natural and Organic Cosmetics Project

Seeing a need and market for more affordable and safe physical hygiene and beauty products in Myanmar, St Peter's Conference in Mandalay submitted a project proposal through their National Council last year. The project requested funds to setup a workshop and provide training for young people in the manufacture of hand-made organic soap and cosmetics. Small business training was also included to build the capacity of young people trained to seek employment or commence self-employment.



An active member of the conference volunteered to provide the training required from her own skills and small business experience. While providing income for the youth involved, the project also aims to provide some profits to the conference for its continued good works, and in bringing Christ to local 'Friends in Need'.

The Gardenvale Conference in Victoria funded the project, which is unique in terms of being initiated, developed and driven by young people, as well as benefitting young members of the local community. The project workshop has been completed and three training sessions undertaken, with 57 young men and women being trained.



The 'Ozanam Natural and Organic Cosmetic' business is licenced and registered to operate in Myanmar, and has developed its business logo. Some project funds will assist with enabling production to commence.