



Phaung Daw Oo Volunteer Information Packet
June 2018

Contents

About Myanmar

About Phaung Daw Oo (PDO) Monastic Education High School

Our Priority Needs for Volunteers

Departments

Academic Departments

 Pre-College Programme (PCP)

 Fast Track English Language Section

 TEAMS

 NTTC

 Mainstream (MS)

 Bridging

 Conversation Clubs

Non-Academic Departments

 Information Technology (IT)

 Tailoring

 Carpentry Workshop

 Healthcare Department (Clinic)

 Library

 Utilities

 Miscellaneous Services

Accommodation

Supplies

General Remarks

Visa's

Currency and Exchange Rates

Lunch

Healthcare

Safety and Security

About Myanmar

Myanmar has been mired in chronic political, social, and economic crises for two generations. In spite of recent political changes, the World Bank reported that approximately 32.1% of the population of the country continues to live in poverty as of 2015. According to the World Bank, Myanmar's GDP per capita for the following year was similar to that of Oman and Costa Rica, at \$69,322.12 USD. The military regimes that ruled Burma from 1962 till 2010 neglected or actively dismantled the education system, meaning that schools and universities were unable to equip students with the skills needed to tackle the enormous challenges facing communities throughout the country. Many foreigners who come to Myanmar fall in love with the country; generally speaking, the people have a reputation for their gentle-hearted kindness. As a foreign volunteer, you could be the first foreigner many Burmese ever interact with!

About Phaung Daw Oo Integrated Monastic Education School (PDO)

Phaung Daw Oo Integrated Monastic Education School was founded in 1993 by the Venerable U Nayaka and his brother, the Venerable U Zawtika. It started as a primary school with ten local volunteer teachers and over 300 students. The school was established with the purpose of providing free education to poor children. PDO is predominantly for poor students who, for various reasons, are unable to attend government schools. Currently, the school is successfully running from Kindergarten to High School levels with over 8000 students and 408 teachers. The students are from both urban and rural poor families and include orphans, abused, neglected, abandoned, and poverty-stricken children of different ethnicities from all around Myanmar. The school provides formal education accredited by the government. PDO provides a safe learning environment for both boys and girls to study without discrimination based on sex, religion, ethnicity, language, and other such qualities.

Requirements for Volunteers

We will provide basic accommodations, lunch from Monday to Friday, and healthcare for those individuals who are prepared to volunteer at PDO for at least **70 days**. This length of time is the current duration of a Burmese Meditation Visa. We expect teaching volunteers to **teach a minimum of 15 hours per week** to a class size of between 15 and 25 students in Fast Track and New Teacher Training Center. For the Mainstream there are between 40 to 70 students per classroom. Some classes are highly structured academic environments and others, such as conversation clubs, are more casual. Classes may be held in a diverse range of settings, including the library, classrooms, and offices. This variety of academic structure and location ensures that teachers can use innovative methods to help students comprehend as much subject material as possible.

Volunteers are required to submit a CV/Résumé for their application. While references are not required, they are greatly appreciated. We do take previous work experience into consideration when recruiting volunteers. We accept volunteers in all of our departments, however; our largest need is within our academic departments. After receiving a prospective volunteer's application, we may ask them to fill out a questionnaire and/or submit to a background check.

We recognize that not everyone who speaks English can teach it. We prefer native English speakers or those of native proficiency. Given that our school is promoting the international education system, we would like our volunteers to have an academic background in education in addition to prior teaching experience. We expect our volunteers to be flexible, professional, and willing to work in a sparse but multicultural environment.

Every volunteer has a unique skill set that they can contribute to our community and we will do our best to facilitate individual skills and expertise. Yet, as previously mentioned, we operate in a limited resource environment. We ask that volunteers consider first and foremost how they can meet Phaung Daw Oo's needs in order to best serve the school. We look forward to our mutually beneficial relationship, and hope you enjoy your time with us!

Departments

Academic Departments

Pre-College Program (PCP)

The Phaung Daw Oo Pre-College Program provides in-house professional and personal development opportunities for committed PDO staff members. The mission of the program is to build the capacity of PDO staff and facilitate the growth of confident leaders who are committed to serving both PDO and the community of Myanmar. PDO-PCP students will build the academic skills necessary to perform their daily work and teaching duties with excellence. By the end of the program, PDO-PCP graduates will have the tools they need to pursue high-quality education programs.

The program's curriculum includes academic English, test preparation (IELTS), social studies, current events, and other academic skills such as basic computing, debate practice, and critical thinking. Service-learning is emphasized throughout the curriculum and students are given ample opportunity to provide direct service to their communities while finding space to learn, question, and grow in their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. At present, PCP recruits students from within the PDO staff group. In the future, however, PDO intends to invite applicants from the wider Mandalay community.

Program Managers: U Aung Myin Thu

Fast Track English Language Section

The Fast Track Section (FT) was founded by our principal, U Nayaka, shortly after the school was created. The idea was to provide a quality education in English, teaching to a smaller group of the children as it was not possible to do that for the whole school with its over 7000 students. In the FT section, different teaching methodology are used to create learning opportunities and support the students' progress on their educational journeys. The classes are from Kindergarten to Grade 8. There are approximately 25 students and no more than 30 students per class. The FT school starts at 9 am and finishes at 3:30 pm. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes and there are six subjects: English, Mathematics, Myanmar, History, Geography, and Science. Teachers are expected to teach each class in English, with the exception of the Myanmar class.

Currently, we have 30 teachers and two section heads. Most of the teachers have teaching experience, confidence in their subject areas, and possess excellent language skills. The FT section has been improved in many ways in the last few years. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement. The biggest gap in our capabilities currently are the subjects Art and Physical Education which are not currently resourced. Volunteers with skills and abilities to teach in these areas are currently in high demand. As previously mentioned, our resources are limited. Therefore, we cannot currently offer dedicated spaces or equipment for Art and Physical Education classes. Nevertheless, we love volunteers that can contribute to these subjects, or any subject areas in our curriculum.

Program Managers:?

Fast Track Teacher Training

The Fast Track Teacher Training Program is dependent on the presence of teacher trainers and the availability of the teachers at Phaung Daw Oo. Whenever available, teachers share their knowledge and skills in sessions before or after school. Some smaller groups may be formed during school time as and when teachers are available, but this opportunity is fairly limited. Volunteers who would like to train teachers should therefore consider coming during summer holidays, from the end of February to the end of May. Teacher trainers are required to be trained in modern pedagogies and offer classes in Standard English.

Program Managers: Daw EiEi Win (Jane), Daw ThiriTun (Mikey)

The Teaching English Association for Monastic Schools (TEAMS)

At Phaung Daw Oo Integrated Monastic Education School, there is a teacher training program run by an organization called the Teaching English Association for Monastic Schools (TEAMS). From November to September the following year, trainees take part in 10 months of intensive training: every day from Monday to Friday. The program's initial aim is to focus on improving the English proficiency of trainees drawn from PDO and other monastic/private schools in, and beyond, Mandalay. By February, the focus shifts to Teaching Methodology. Trainees are taught about learning and teaching, for example, how to plan engaging lessons and how to assess students' understanding. Trainees progress to teaching practice in June and July at PDO's New Teacher Training Centre (NTTC). During August, teachers are expected to complete one month of knowledge transfer and teaching in selected monastic schools across Myanmar, before graduating in September. The programme welcomes applicants and teachers from monastic and private schools. For more information about this programme please visit www.teamspdo.simplesite.com

Courses & Activities

- Ten-month English course covering Basic, Elementary, and Pre-intermediate levels, taught by foreign volunteers and experts;
- Modern Teaching Methodology taught by SES German Professionals, British, and Australian Teachers;
- Gardening and Environmental Science;
- Practical science taught by a German expert;
- Computing lessons;
- Online teaching via Skype;
- English Language Foundation;
- School observation trips and teaching practice in NTTC classes;
- Teaching practice in alternative monastic settings;
- Exchange activities with a Montessori school in Germany;
- Various volunteer camps that provide outreach to local communities.

Program Manager – U Zin Maung Maung

The New Teacher Training Center (NTTC)

Originally supported by our sponsor, [Förderverein Myanmar](http://www.fuerdervereinmyanmar.org), The New Teacher Training Centre (NTTC) was founded in 2011 within the English Teaching Department at Phaung Daw Oo Integrated Monastic Education School (PDO). Drawing on a pool of successful trainees from the aforementioned TEAMS, this program aims to raise the standards of education across the monastic school network in, and beyond, Mandalay. The NTTC motto is 'Education needs time: better learning through better teaching'. In 2016, PDO Monastic Education school was granted responsibility for NTTC and continuing its work. NTTC is an academic program for students in Grades 5 through 8.

Primary students are selected from the mainstream classes to attend NTTC classes. Teachers use a child-centred approach (CCA) to foster a dynamic learning environment. This methodology promotes a deeper understanding of the subject material in addition to developing key life-skills, such as critical thinking. The CCA, combined with a maximum class size of 30 students, guarantees high-quality interactions within the classroom. Students' levels of attainment are far higher than those achieved by the rote learning system common to most monastic schools. NTTC teachers, some of whom are trained by TEAMS, receive intensive English proficiency lessons as well as training in Teaching Methodology by foreign experts, who serve as PDO volunteers. Participants in NTTC develop a defined sense of autonomy, making learning a pleasurable experience for all.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, PDO had eight NTTC classes, two per grade level, with a total number of 206 students and 23 teachers. NTTC classes have the same schedule and subject materials as the Fast Track (FT) classes. In addition, students have the chance to participate in Music, Art, Sports, and Computing lessons. NTTC

classes are bilingual, taught in both English and Burmese languages, so that the students may transition to higher levels of English proficiency through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) strategies. Due to the professional competence and English language proficiency of the NTTC teachers, students can learn an assortment of different subject through collaborative and independent study in a stimulating environment.

Foreign volunteers can take part in co-teaching and mentoring activities with NTTC by sharing ideas for lesson planning and supporting teachers in the NTTC classrooms. Volunteers who are qualified teachers can also provide teacher training, observe lessons, and give feedback on the TEAMS programme.

Program Managers: Daw Thantar Moe (Julie), Daw Poe Zar Li Ko, and U ZinMaungMaung(Jude)

Bridging

Bridging is a educational programme for Myanmar youth who finished high school and university levels that focuses on developing Cambridge English language proficiency, social science knowledge, and critical thinking tools. Through developing these skills, Bridging encourages students to engage with and impact their local communities while establishing frameworks for future success. In addition, upon completion of the Bridging coursework, students sit for one of the Cambridge English Assessments. This gives students the opportunity to build their credibility and proficiency in English language skills for future employers. Bridging is committed to growing curiosity, self-confidence, courage, and compassion among students and staff. The Bridging program has been supported by PDO sponsor, [World Child Care \(WCC\)](#) since 2015.

Program Structure

Classes run from January to August every year, with an April break for Thingyan, the Myanmar Water Festival. The Bridging experience culminates in students sitting for the Cambridge English exam upon completion of coursework.

Bridging Levels	Cambridge English	Social Science	Comparison with CEFR	Comparison with IELTS
I	Movers	I	A1	2
II	Key English Test (KET)	II	A2	3
III	Preliminary English Test (PET)	III	B1	4-5
IV	IELTS	IV	B1+	5+

Program Manager: Daw NannMyint

Curriculum Developer: Daw Shwe Yee Oo

Academic Supervisor: Daw MyoMyoKhaing

Program Instructors: Daw Tin Tin Win, Daw Aye Sandar, Mr. Ollie Ortwin Johannes Folger

Mainstream

An estimated 90% of PDO students are part of the Mainstream program. In the past, each MS class had more than 100 students, due to a high demand for education. Now, there are 50 students per class, a significant improvement. NC classes are taught in two shifts; 8:00 pm to 11:30 am and 12:30pm to 4:00pm.

In order to meet the demands for basic education, many MS teachers have not been fortunate enough to receive extensive teacher training and therefore rely on rote learning with minimal English. In order to provide the same quality of education to the MS students as the other departments, PDO encourages volunteers to participate in MS classes. It may be more of a challenge, but the impact foreign volunteers can have on this department is invaluable. If you are an ambitious volunteer seeking to make effectual change at our school, MS classes are perfect for you.

Program Managers: Than Than Win

Conversation Clubs

Phaung Daw Oo offers conversation clubs for teachers and staff in order to build confidence and pronunciation skills. By taking part in group discussions, participants build public speaking skills and teamwork skills. Our volunteer coordinator works together with individual volunteers, staff, and student groups to decide the time and location of our conversation clubs.

Please contact our volunteer coordinator, Myat Mon Thu, to discuss the conversation clubs.

Email – myatmonthu.aug@gmail.com

Non-Academic Departments

Non-Formal Education:

Non-Formal Education (NFE) was started in 2014 in order to meet the needs of children who are unable to participate in PDO's academic department programs for a variety of reasons. Some are forced to forfeit their education in order to provide for an impoverished family, others are from rural areas where schools were not available, and others are victims of civil war and natural disasters. Regardless of the reasons, PDO welcomes these students into the NFE program.

Currently, there are 200 students and 7 teachers within the NFE program. Classes run from 8:30am to 3:00pm, with an hour-long lunch break starting at 11:30am. The NFE curriculum combines the government curriculum with additional skills like basic reading, writing, personal hygiene, and civic education. These basic education classes give a second chance to those who were not fortunate enough to receive one earlier in their lives. After completing the NFE program, these students have the ability to participate in PDO's academic programs and potentially attend university as well. Regardless of whether participants take advantage of this additional opportunity, the NFE program allows for participants to secure better employment opportunities in the future, reducing the effect of poverty on their lives.

Many educators in the NFE program are junior teachers who need more training. PDO provides teaching methodology training to NFE junior teachers from 3:00pm to 4:00pm every weekday. Still, there is a high demand for English-speaking volunteers to both teach NFE classes and provide teacher training to NFE junior teachers.

Program Manager: U San Win (Ven- Jannida)

Information Technology (IT)

There are 40 computers and 7 teachers in the IT department, including our Department Head, Ven Wannathiri. The IT department is made of two sections, training and repair/maintenance.

Each IT class teaches approximately 40 students at a time, offering basic computer skills, like Microsoft Office, to help them succeed in the future. Training occurs approximately five times each year, with 200 students receiving training annually. Training classes aren't exclusive to PDO students, teachers and staff can receive training as well! For those who want IT training who are not members of the PDO community, there is a 20,000 kyat charge.

In the future, PDO hopes to integrate computing skills into our school curriculum with courses such as web design, mobile software development, networking, and hardware classes.

Programme Managers: Ven. Wannathiri

Tailoring

PDO offers vocational training in the form of our Tailoring Department. This department has two teachers and approximately five students who operate the program. Annually, 30 middle school students participate in this department during their free time. This department teaches students skills that they can use outside of school to secure income. The tailoring program offers training on constructing curtains, purses, school bags, neckties, school uniforms, and *longyis*, the traditional clothing worn in Myanmar.

Program Managers: Daw Tin Tin Swe

Carpentry Workshop

Currently, the monk U Zin Tay Zaw is our primary carpentry teacher and administrator. We have about 5 local staff who are operating that workshop. Basically working for furniture for both PDO facilities and outside orders.

Program Manager: U Zin Tay Zaw

Healthcare Department (Clinic)

The Phaung Daw Oo Healthcare Department began in 2002 with the goal of providing free healthcare to all patients. This includes students, staff, volunteers, and outside patrons from the surrounding Myanmar community. Our clinic is a three-story facility with a general practitioner on the ground floor, eye care on the second floor, and a dental clinic on the third floor.

Currently, there are 17 healthcare professionals at the PDO clinic: 6 physicians and 11 nurses. Phaung Daw Oo also accepts medical professionals as volunteers in the clinic. For example, our Swiss partner (name?) provides volunteers for our dental clinic annually.

Having an on-site healthcare department allows Phaung Daw Oo to provide a safe learning environment for all students, teachers, and staff. This, in turn, improves the quality of the learning experience for all involved.

Programme Manager: Dr. Myint Khaing Htay

Library

The Sukatami Library is Phaung Daw Oo's school-based library, created in 1998. Its name means "The Search for Knowledge". Graciously donated by Diana and Graham Millington of England, the Sukatami library has five library staff, two of which have received library training from the British Council Library in Yangon. Although its primary patrons are PDO students, teachers, and staff, PDO allows members of the broader Myanmar community to become members of the library as well. The Sukatami library offers the following facilities for its users:

Audio Room: This location allows for independent English language study via CDs, audiobooks, and videos in addition to computers and English teacher resource materials.

Book Room: This location allows readers to immerse themselves in English literature by providing books of all varieties, including but not limited to, early childhood, classic, junior fiction, fiction, nonfiction, engineering, and medical literature.

Library Hall: On the top floor of the Sukatami Library, there is a multipurpose hall for classes, meetings, and seminars with a carrying capacity of 150 persons.

In addition to facilities, the Sukatami Library provides the following programs for its patrons:

- **Reading Time:** Library staff provide assistance for young students in their English reading skills. Sessions last between 45 to 60 minutes per class for 5-6 classes daily. This is a program for FT, NTTTC, NC, and NFE students.

The Sukatami Library Staff hope to begin the following programs in the near future:

- Book Club: A program where members of the Book Club read and discuss one book a month.
- Foreign Volunteer Program: Bringing foreign volunteers to the Sukatami Library in order to help readers improve their reading skills.
- Library Training: A program where trained Library staff can communicate the skills learned at the British Council Library to other interested PDO personnel.
- Mind craft Thematic Workshops: To help students learn about youth, education, sports, unity, and charity through the medium of literature.

Program Manager: Daw Thin Thin Aye

Nutrition Program

Starting in June 2018, PDO began a Nutrition Program for its students. Every day, the school kitchen prepares a nutritious meal for a different age group at the school. This program helps ensure the students are able to be healthy and focused in their studios.

Program Manager: Daw Khim Moe Moe

Utilities

Volunteers continue to provide invaluable aid concerning water and electric services. Please contact the Assistant Construction Manager Daw Chan Mya Aye or the head of the Electricity and Water Pipeline.

Program Managers: Daw Chan Mya Aye

Miscellaneous Services

If you have a skill that you would like to contribute, but it does not fit in one of the above categories, please, let us know by contacting the Volunteer Coordinator, Myat Mon Thu. Phaung Daw Oo Integrated Monastic Education School interacts with a diverse set of volunteers with a variety of different schools, we would like to welcome you in any way we can!

Accommodation

PDO provides accommodation to those volunteers who possess a current and valid Meditation visa. Some of the volunteer bedrooms have their own in-suite bathrooms. Others have separate, shared bathrooms with a maximum of two volunteers to a bathroom. Each room has a bed, mosquito net, blanket, table, chair, drinking water, electricity, and a fan/AC. Most rooms have twin beds; volunteers may be expected to share a room with another volunteer of the same gender. Couples may be allocated their own twin room if availability allows. Phaung Daw Oo is a charity; we do our best to ensure our volunteers are as comfortable as possible. However, we cannot guarantee consistent supplies or western-style standards. If a volunteer requires additional living items, it is their responsibility to purchase them locally or bring them to PDO. In addition, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to clean their own rooms during their stay at PDO. Please note that older volunteers, volunteers with special needs, or volunteers who will be working at the monastery for longer periods of time will be given priority with their accommodation allocation.

Some volunteers will find it noisy since natives of Myanmar are accustomed to a higher noise level. In addition, there are stray dogs that live at PDO. They are harmless but can occasionally contribute to the noise level.

Supplies

Teaching resources are available in the Pre-College Program (PCP) office on the second floor of the Sukatami Library, and in the cabinet in the Sukatami Library Audio Room. If volunteers are interested in these materials, please approach the PCP program directors or the Sukatami librarian.

Printing services and internet access are available in the PDO Main Office or the PCP Office. In addition, there are several internet cafes on 19th street in Mandalay. If volunteers need to photocopy class materials, they may do so at the Main Office. The photocopier instructions are posted in English.

If a projector or audio speakers are needed to class time, please inform the PCP Program Managers at least one day in advance.

All of these resources are to be used exclusively for class materials and are not permitted for personal use.

Visas

In order to secure a Myanmar Meditation Visa, PDO will supply an invitation letter. This type of visa ensures that you may live at PDO during your volunteering period. Without a Myanmar Meditation Visa, volunteers **cannot** live at the monastery. If necessary, there are other living options near PDO with cost estimates ranging from \$35 to \$75 USD per night. Prior to applying for the visa, we urge volunteers to contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Myat Mon Thu, in order to discuss individual details of the visa process.

We recommend having the Meditation Visa processed through the Embassy of Myanmar in Bangkok; this institution is familiar with processing visas. It can take up to several weeks to process visas from Europe, the US, and other non-Southeast Asian locations. Please keep the visa processing period in mind when applying for a Meditation Visa.

If it becomes necessary to extend your Meditation Visa, PDO will work with the Immigration Office and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Please keep in mind that unless the volunteer is staying for a year minimum, any associated fees with visa extension are the responsibility of the volunteer, and not PDO.

Requirements for the Meditation Visa Invitation Letter:

- Full name as it appears on your passport
- Passport number

Requirements for the Meditation Visa through the Myanmar Embassy:

- Business or Meditation Visa Application
- Two passport-sized photos
- Passport
- Letter of Invitation from a Myanmar Buddhist organization (e.g. Phaung Daw Oo Integrated Monastic Education School)
- The Organization's Registration (only required in special cases)
- Payment

Currency and Exchange Rates

As of July 2018, \$1 USD is approximately 1,402 Myanmar kyats. It is now possible to exchange money in airports and in government banks in major metropolitan areas. It is also possible to change money at some exchange centers and travel agencies. If additional funds are required, there are a number of ATMs in Yangon and Mandalay that accept major foreign cards.

Lunch

As previously mentioned, lunch is provided from Monday to Friday between 12:30pm and 1:30pm. Volunteers are responsible for their breakfast and dinner in addition to any weekend meals.

Healthcare

PDO strongly recommends that volunteers secure their own appropriate health insurance prior to volunteering in Myanmar. Notwithstanding, the PDO Healthcare Clinic is available for all volunteers whilst volunteering at PDO.

Safety and Security

Phaung Daw Oo has three main gates with various closing times:

1. Main Gate: 6:00pm
2. South gate: 7:00pm
3. North Gate: 10:30pm

Keys are not provided for any of these gates. We strongly recommend that volunteers return to PDO prior to 10:30pm. If volunteers arrive later than 10:30pm, please call a designated contact to unlock the gate for you. Please do not climb over the PDO walls. If you feel that you need to stay out later than the closing time on a regular basis, we recommend staying at a nearby hotel rather than in the monastery.

Specific PDO staff members are responsible for helping our volunteers, including managing volunteer living spaces, providing lunch, and other various needs. These staff members will be identified to the volunteer during their face-to-face orientation at PDO. For any questions or concerns, please contact our volunteer coordinator, Myat Mon Thu.

In addition, PDO would like volunteers to take the following points into consideration:

1. Volunteers are responsible for locking their own windows and doors;
2. Smoking and consumption of alcohol are prohibited inside the school compound;
3. For any overnight trips, volunteers must inform the volunteer coordinator with details of the trip, including the exact dates of the trip, planned living arrangements, and a valid contact phone number.
4. For any school trips, volunteers must obtain permission from the volunteer coordinator, Myat Mon Thu, prior to the trip.

Mobile Phone Networks

PDO recommends that volunteers purchase a local SIM card during their stay in Myanmar. Mobile phone networks are relatively new and reliable; data is generally 3G but 4G is available in larger cities. These networks are generally more reliable and faster than many complimentary WiFi networks in teashops and hotels. The three main mobile phone network providers are Ooredoo, Telenor, and MPT. Most volunteers purchase a SIM card, then a top-up, and then use the top-up to purchase a data pack.

Mobile Network codes

Check balance: *124# <call>

Top-Up: *123*<voucher code>#<call>

Internet Access (Wi-Fi)

Internet access and speed in Myanmar is very poor by western standards. However, we do have a PC with internet access that Volunteers can use in the office between 5:00 am and 10:00 pm, provided it is not being used by staff. We can also connect **ONE** device to the Wi-Fi network for the duration of your stay. Please bring your device to the Main Office to get it connected.

Frequently Asked Questions:

[Can I get involved in politics, human rights, or journalism while volunteering?](#)

No. For the safety of our students, staff, and other volunteers it is vital that our volunteers and PDO do not get involved in political activities, human rights activities, journalism, or any activities that might be construed as anti-government. Please do not apply for this program if you intend to engage in the activities listed above or with any anti-government activities while in Myanmar. This is essential to protect our students and school.

What does it cost to be a volunteer?

There are no fees associated with volunteering with PDO, but volunteers are expected to provide for their own visa costs, flights, transportation, and meals (with the exception of weekday lunch).

Average prices:

- Guest houses: \$12-\$40 USD per night
- Internet: \$0.50 per hour
- Meals: \$1-\$3 USD at a local establishment
- Overnight buses from Mandalay to Yangon: \$13 USD (and approximately 9 hours travel time)
- Taxis from PDO to MDL airport: \$10-\$15 USD (and approximately 1 hour travel time)

How do I change money?

Feel free to bring cash in US dollars or euros! Banks, travel agencies, and other money changers will accept these currencies. However, they will only accept crisp, unmarked notes. We recommend bringing \$100 notes for the best possible exchange rate. Currently, credit cards and traveller's checks are not accepted in most places, with the exception of high end hotels. ATMs are becoming more common; there are two outside City Mart, a major supermarket that is only a short walk from PDO. There are also banks available on 19th street.

How can I learn more about Myanmar?

PDO encourages its volunteers to learn about Myanmar by following current events online, reading books, and watching documentaries prior to arriving in Myanmar. For related news sources, volunteers can follow *The Myanmar Times*, an English newspaper based in Yangon. There are also Myanmar news sources based out of Thailand such as *The Democratic Voice of Burma*, *The Irrawaddy*, and Mizzima. International news sources like the BBC and *The New York Times* also regularly report on Myanmar.

Recommended readings:

- The River of Lost Footsteps* by Than MyintOo
- Where India Meets China, a New Crossroads of Asia* by Than MyintOo
- Burmese Days* by George Orwell
- The Land of the Green Ghosts* by Pascal KhooThwe
- The State in Myanmar* by James Taylor
- The Burma Road* by Donovan Webster

To read more about PhaungDawOo, visit our website <http://www.pdoeducation.org/> or check out the following news articles:

[“Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School Wins Citizen of Burma Award”](#) – *The Irrawaddy* (2017)

[“Monastic School Teachers to Get Training”](#) – *The Myanmar Times* (2017)

[“Putting Students First at Phaung Daw Oo”](#) – *Frontier Myanmar* (2017)

[“Breathing New Life Into Myanmar’s Monastic Schools”](#) – *Buddhist Door* (2017)

[“Monastic School to Offer University Classes”](#) – *The Myanmar Times* (2015)

[“A Class of Their Own”](#) – *The Financial Times* (2012)

We hope to see you soon!