



# Week of Compassion

## A Bridge to the Future in Myanmar



Photo by CWS



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### *By CWS*

It's a two-hour drive from Yangon, the largest city in Myanmar (Burma) out to Maubin Township. From the town of Maubin it's another hour's drive to Inn Ma Su village. You can make that drive in the dry season. During the rainy season between July and September, the roads between Maubin and Inn Ma Su flood, and your only option is a 90-minute boat ride. About 1,400 people live in Inn Ma Su and the nearby villages of Kyone Cha, Ywar Ma and Sint Ku.

The rainy season presents challenges and risks for everyone, including children. During the dry season, it takes the children from Inn Ma Su about 40 minutes each way to walk to and from school. Not only does it take much longer in the rainy season, but it is also dangerous because of muddy paths and both standing and moving water. During the height of the rainy season children can't walk to school at all - they have to be taken by boat. That is a time consuming solution for both the children and their family members, and it is also dangerous.

Something needed to change to help students get to school. In early 2017, with support from Week of Compassion, Church World Service began to plan and construct a new, 90-foot concrete bridge so that school children could access the main road more safely and easily. The CWS team in Myanmar worked with village leaders and the community's Water and Sanitation Committee to choose a bridge design - one that included hand rails and a safe

surface - and draw up construction plans and a budget. The community committed to share the cost of the bridge by donating labor.

Work on the new bridge began in March. A CWS engineer worked with skilled masons and community volunteers to ensure quality work for safety and sustainability. The bridge was completed in April, in time for a mid-May inauguration and celebration.

While the bridge was designed with students in mind, it's benefits are far reaching for the people of Inn Ma Su. Ma Kaythi, a mother of three, told us, "I feel so happy that we have the bridge because I do not worry any more about my kids walking through the creek when they go to and from school. Now, they can go safely within a shorter time. The bridge also encourages women like me to go to the Health Center for medical care and treatment because it is now much less difficult and time-saving."

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