



**"BECAUSE OF YOU MY LIFE'S BEEN
CHANGED... THANK YOU!!"**

You've seen in the last three updates how your *dāna* has helped villagers and nuns. In this last update about our 2011 activities, we will share a few highlights of offerings that we've made to support families (and children without families) with offerings for shelter, education, and water.

Support for Orphans

As usual, we had a hard time finding the Happy Haven Humanitarian Project when we went to offer *dāna*: HHHP is an orphanage for HIV-positive kids, and as such it is tucked away in an obscure neighborhood on the remotest fringe of Yangon. Here, AIDS and HIV are still viewed as a scourge, and those who are affected are often shunned. But not at HHHP! This is not a place that offers simple shelter, but it's clearly also a family. The atmosphere is beautiful—the kids are treated as 'just kids,' with a ton of love and care. Now there are 60 youngsters who live at HHHP, between the ages of 2 and 15 years, and everyone gets an education and job skills so that they can support themselves when they leave as adults. Every other day, the kids attend 'regular' school outside, and are taught in classrooms at HHHP on alternate days, so that they don't become too tired. Monks from a local monastery also teach here, so the kids also get a Dhamma education. This year, the day we visited happened to be an 'outside' day, so most of the kids were away at school, and it was very quiet. But even so, the *mettā* at HHHP was obvious—the staff *loves* these kids! Daw Aye Aye

Myint, who was showing us around, met each child with fondness, and treated them as if they were her own. And the day room has plenty of toys and books, and pictures of the kids on the wall—all this being an indication that this isn't an institution, it's actually *home* to all these children.



Mettā at HHHP: Daw Aye Myint and one of the resident pre-teens.

HHHP runs with a staff of 24 (including nurse's aides), and a doctor who comes on a daily basis. Daw Aye Aye Myint said that the children get the medications they need from either Medcins Sans Frontiers or a Government hospital.

Support for Education

Again this year we were happy to be able to generously offer to various schools and projects that provide badly needed educational opportunities for needy children.

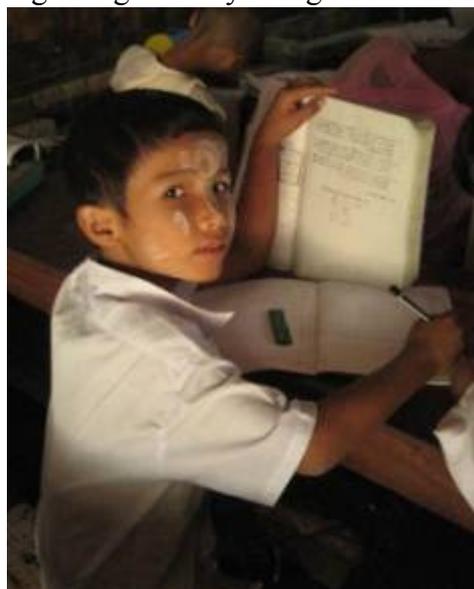
Kyaikasan School

Daw Yuzana's school for nuns and poor girls opened soon after Cyclone Nargis in 2008. As we wrote in the New Year's update, the number of students continues to grow and now she says she is operating at maximum capacity. As was the case last year we offered *dāna* for general operating expenses, which are now almost 2000 US Dollars per month. We recently heard a heartwarming story about the life of one of

the girls who has been living as a nun there for the last two years. Ma Nandacārī is the daughter of Daw Nilar, one of the helpers at CMMC. The girl had been badly injured at her work-place in the summer before her last year of school and because she was under-age, the factory could get away with simply firing her—and of course didn't offer her any compensation for medical expenses. She was permanently crippled (without the use of a right hand) and depressed, and her life looked grim. But we told her about Daw Yuzana's nunnery and the (then) new school, and within a week she had ordained and was beginning to study again. This month Daw Nilar told us that now not only is her daughter thriving as a nun, but also that she has passed her 10th Standard examinations and is beginning to study at higher levels. Daw Yuzana had told us in



Kyaikkasan School: For all these girls, education is now a reality rather than a dream!



An eager student at Zaloon Parahita

November that this year 2 students were doing University-level work by correspondence, and it turns out that Ma Nandacārī is one of these. Her life has completely turned around. There are 400 other 'Ma Nandacārīs' at this school, either as day students or as resident nuns: many lives are being saved here!

Expanding the Vision: Zaloon Parahita School...

As we've described before, nunneries in Myanmar do a huge amount of *defacto* social service, taking in orphans and poor girls who might otherwise be on the streets. But in spite of all this work, no-one stops to 'rest on their laurels'! When the nuns see a need and find new ways to serve, if they are in a position to do something to help, they *help!* Two of the nunneries supported by Metta In Action (Zaloon Parahita and Appamada Nunneries) have started or will be starting free monastic schools for local children, providing even *more* community service.

Last year Daw Ayesingi at the Zaloon Parahita Nunnery started a free monastic school for all the children in her area. At the beginning of the 2010 school year, there were 160 students attending the school; by September that number had gone up to 220, and by January 2011, there were over 370 students. Because of the very simple infrastructure and small space available for the school, students only attend classes for a half-day, with one group in the morning and the rest after noon. The curriculum and the teachers are up to the standard of what children would be getting at a ‘regular’ school, but there is no cost at all for attendance.



Studying hard and happily!

When we went to see the school in January, we were blown away by what the nuns have accomplished with very little infrastructure! It was a hive of activity, with 8 classrooms under one roof, each separated from the others by a bamboo partition (see the photo which opens this update). The older students were learning algebra and English, and the little ones

were getting arithmetic drills, or chanting the Burmese alphabet, or learning how to tell time. Many of the young nuns in our area attend this school, receiving a secular education to complement the Dhamma education they get at their nunneries. At the end of the year, the school holds a prize-giving ceremony to recognize the most outstanding students, and we were very touched when we began to see the trophies appearing in the nunneries we know: a first prize here or a second prize there—clearly, many of these young nuns have already developed a strong work ethic!

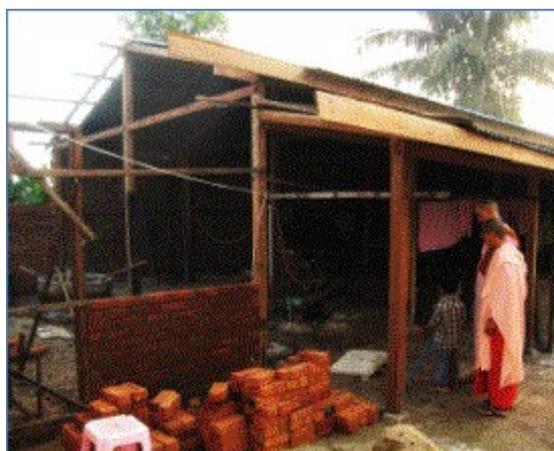


Awards on display for work well done.

It would be understandable if Daw Ayesingi and the other nuns at Zaloon Parahita rested during the school holidays. But instead, they offer a course in Buddhist studies for 100 local children! They also offer lunch for the students during this time, which is a very expensive endeavor, so we made a second offering of meal *dāna*, supporting both the work of the nuns, and the health of the local kids.

Appamada School

One of the most wonderful things about making offerings to the nuns is seeing how their good ideas spread like viruses, and how the work of one nunnery will encourage someone else to go forward with *their* ideas. These nuns have a lot of initiative, and often have definite ideas about the work they want to do. And Metta In Action can provide supportive conditions! In January, we were approached by Daw Sumanacari, the abbess of Appamada Nunnery. Some of her youngest nuns go to school at Zaloon Parahita, and they have to walk almost 45 minutes in each direction to get there. So she wanted to start a similar free school, specifically for the little ones, so they don't have to walk all that way in the sun (during the hot season) or through the mud (in the rainy season). And because Metta In Action had helped her before, she felt she could ask us for help with start-up costs. Of course we were happy to do this! And once we assured her that we could help, she breathed a big sigh of relief, and later she



Daw Sumanacari shows us the new school building

told us that she could now rest at night: before she'd been so worried about how to go ahead that she hadn't been able to sleep!



Nuns walking home from Zaloon Parakita—
with no protection from the blazing sun!

In late March, Daw Sumanacari invited us to come and see the progress she'd made on the new buildings. When we walked over there, the sun was just coming up, but already it was uncomfortably hot, and we could very well imagine how it would feel for small children to have to spend almost an hour walking in such heat. What we saw at the nunnery was an astonishing transformation. Before, the Appamada Nunnery had 2 main buildings and a bamboo kitchen. Now, the older of the two main buildings and the kitchen had been dismantled and a large new classroom building was under construction against the back wall of the property, using the roofing material and much of the wood from the old building.

She intends to open the school at the start of the academic year this June. It will be for 1st through 4th Standard only, with 5 teachers and a capacity of 200 students. Already we have heard that many of the youngest nuns from the Sasanaramsi Nunnery plan to be attending this school. And

once the word gets out, many needy kids in the neighborhood will also benefit.

Shwebo School

In September of 2010, a vicious tropical storm struck Burma. We caught the edge of it in Yangon, but the full force hit Central Myanmar. There was a great deal of damage and loss; the full extent which was not widely publicized. In December Sayadw U Indaka learned of a school in a remote village near Shwebo that had been completely destroyed by the force of the storm. So he asked us if we would be willing to consider making a donation. A Sayadaw in Shwebo who was known to Sayadaw U Indaka was heading up the effort to rebuild the school. Meeting with Shwebo Sayadaw later, we learned more details of the



The remains of the school after the storm

situation: After the storm, over 800 kids had to study outside. As happened after Cyclone Nargis, communities were left to fend for themselves in the wake of the storm; no official help was forthcoming to rebuild. But Shwebo Sayadaw was doing whatever it would take to rebuild the school. He'd managed to collect enough *dāna* to put up a roof, but there were no walls. After we offered him our donation, he said that we had freed him from a great burden and he felt cool again!



Ma Rose and her team of Helping
Hands volunteers distributing
uniforms and supplies...

Helping Hands

Glen Morris (a Canadian teacher in a private school in Yangon) and his team of young Burmese volunteers do a magnificent job of making it possible for poor children to get an education. The volunteers work 'under the wire' to match needy kids with available schools, at no small risk to themselves. Last school year with the help of your *dāna*,

the Helping Hands Project supported 1234 impoverished children either by providing full scholarships, or by paying for supplies, books, and uniforms. Glen told us that technically although education is free, that's far from what actually is the case. Fees and the required uniforms and supplies are significant expenses for a poor family, and the inability to afford these things can be enough to keep a child from getting an education. The emphasis of the Helping Hands project last year was on making sure that students in the higher grades would be fully supported so that they would be able



...And some of the happy recipients!

to graduate. But that meant that some children had to be turned away, a heartbreaking decision for the team to have to make. Helping Hands volunteers arranged to have all the uniforms sewn, rather than buying ready-made ones, which more than halved the costs—maximizing number of kids who could receive support. Glen shared some heart-warming stories that were written by the volunteers; here is part of one of them, written by Ma Rose: *“Ma Tin Tin Kyaw was included in our Helping Hands Community Service Project. She is attending Standard Ten. There are six members in her family, and they are so poor that Tin Tin Kyaw’s Mother couldn’t enroll her children in school because she can’t get money even for their food. When we accepted them to join in our project she was on cloud nine.”*

And Offerings of Water...Life-Supporting Gifts!



A tank being constructed... water, water everywhere, and soon there'll be enough to drink!

Each January, we look forward to visiting Father Cyril at Swe Thahar Community Development Project; his work inspires us greatly. Using what we offered last year, Swe Thahar built eight 5000-liter water tanks at ECCD Schools (pre-schools) in Aung Naing, Yay Wai, Kan Nyin Kwin, Aung Kone, Ah Su Lay Zin Ywe Gyi, Ou Yin Khone, and Amat Kalay villages in Laputta Township. This is where Cyclone Nargis struck the hardest in 2008, and people are still in need of reliable water sources. Father Cyril had photos and stories to share with us, so that we could better understand just how important these tanks were to the villagers. What was most touching were the messages of thanks from the people who received the tanks! Daw Myint Aye, a

teacher from Ou Yin Khone ECCD School wrote: *“I am very happy for getting this water tank for our school. Before we didn't have enough water for drinking and using and had much difficulties regarding water especially in dry season. Now, there is drinking water for coming dry season and for use if needed for children. We teachers had worries for water because children are young ages and they need to be clean very often. And we had to buy water in some days of dry season since we don't have big tanks for storage. Now, parents also are happy to see the tanks for their children in school. We are lucky to get this tank. Thank you very much for your donation!”*



Preschool kids at Ou Yin Khone Village

When we asked Father Cyril what the present water needs are in the Delta, he told us that NGOs had been building ponds, but that these don't work as well as water tanks if there's flooding or drought. So tanks are still a necessity. But they can be built quite quickly, and for a reasonable cost. So we offered enough for 7 or 8 more tanks to be built where the need is greatest.

The Metta Clinic

We continue to offer support for the Metta Clinic, the free medical clinic at CMMC. Living here at the Centre, we often forget how much it benefits the people here in the village. But every sometimes we get a vivid reminder that your *dāna* to the clinic makes a huge difference in people's lives, in ways we might never know. One day, we were walking back to CMMC after inspecting one of the re-built houses when a middle-aged woman ran up to us; she was very excited, and the words were tumbling out of her mouth faster than my limited Burmese could catch. At first I thought she would be asking if we could re-build her house too, but even without being able to understand the spate of words, I could see that her body language was very happy. It turned out that she was telling Ven. Ariya Ñāṇī that last year her health was very bad, and she hadn't been able to work. But she went to the Metta Clinic, and the treatment she got worked wonders—so now she has a job again and can support her family. She said, "Because of the clinic, my life's been changed...THANK YOU soooooo much!!"



Whose life will be changed next at the Metta Clinic??

Your Donations Are Life-Giving!

Isn't it wonderful? Maybe you gave some *dāna* in Switzerland, in Australia, in Hawai'i, the USA, or Ireland...somewhere very far away. And as a result, on the other side of the world someone's life has been turned around. Today far away, someone can feed their family because of you. Or a child has good water to drink. Or maybe an orphan has love and a bed to sleep in tonight. And many children are eagerly looking forward to going to school when it starts in June because of the gifts you have offered. We couldn't possibly know or describe all the lives your beautiful actions of generosity touch. The merit ripples outwards out of sight!

So when we offer your *dāna*, we feel very privileged and grateful to be the conduits for this great stream of goodness and compassion. It's changed *our* lives, too, and we feel deeply blessed! So we wish that you find joy in knowing of the fruits of your actions, and may your generosity be the cause of the deepest happiness and peace! Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu!!!

Vīrañāṇī
Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre

