

The Fruits of Your Generosity Are Sweet Indeed!



Since our last update in April, much has been accomplished, and it's immensely gratifying to see how well and quickly your *dāna* turns into schools, nunneries, and homes. At the close of the year when many think of what they want to change 'next year,' we thought we'd show you the completed results of a few things you've changed *this* year! So here is our year-end message with deep thanks—because without your heartfelt generosity and goodwill, none of this would ever have happened.

The Nuns Begin to Realize Their Dreams

At the close of Vassa (the annual monastic rainy season retreat), many of the nuns from nearby nunneries came to Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre to pay respects to Sayadaw U Indaka, or to participate in the Kathina ceremony that takes place after Vassa has ended. As they shared their news, there was clearly great joy—and for us there was amazement. So much has happened in so little time!



And once we visited the nuns, it became clear that the reality is even more amazing than their stories! At Mingalagonwei Nunnery, we were blown away to see a new two-storey building that has sprouted up in front of the new toilets that were finished last April. Downstairs there's a large kitchen and dining area, and upstairs there's ample space for everyone to sleep comfortably. Lessons and pujas still take place in the shrine room of the old building, but the children no longer live there, packed in like sardines in a tin!

And the Sasanasukhacari (Laputta) Nunnery had an even bigger surprise in store for us. It turned out that the original building that housed the shrine room had collapsed in the

rainy season, so they took the opportunity to create the beginning of a new structure in its place—one that termites and cyclones won't be able to destroy. While the new building is under construction they are all living in the two-storey building that was added in 2010. Somehow, in spite of all the construction work and the responsibility of running the nunnery, Daw Uttama very successfully continues her studies at the Buddhist University in Yangon, now in their third year.



A School Appears...and a Working Relationship is Formed



When we offered Daw Sumanacari the dāna to start her monastic school this last January, we knew she had a huge task ahead of her to open the school in time for the start of the academic year in June. There were many bureaucratic hurdles for her to overcome, and a lot of work to do—but she pulled it off spectacularly!

Thanks entirely to your dāna, 180 kids from Pre-kindergarten to 4th Standard are now receiving a completely free education! During a recent visit when Steve, Duke, and Roger of the Myanmar Schools Project offered dāna and passed out new uniforms, we were

treated to an ear-splitting blessing as all the kids 'chanted' (i.e. yelled!) a Mettā chant in recognition of the offering!

Up the road at the Zaloon Parahita School, there are now almost 500 students, in Standards 1 through 9. Both schools anticipate increased enrollment in the coming years in spite of limited space and funds for expansion. It's the way things happen here—people 'make do,' rather than attempting to create perfection!



In November, the Myanmar Schools Project and the Four Friends Group offered generous grants to both Zaloon Parahita and Appamada Schools for toilets and improvements to the buildings. Inspired by the success of these simple monastic schools, the MSP hopes to continue to work together with us to provide long-term support for them, so that as many kids as possible have the opportunity to receive an education. We are heartened and excited by this new collaboration, as it will allow us to offer even more dāna to nuns and villagers.

Changing Times, Hard Times

Times are changing in Myanmar. Recently, there's been a lot of media coverage about certain events here that have brought hope to many. But away from the spotlight (on the ground in the villages), things are not so different. In fact, for the common person, the situation may be even harder. There is certainly more money and economic openness, but 'trickle-down economics' doesn't work here, either. So the rich are getting richer while the poor continue to struggle.



Then (April 2009)...



...And now (December 2011)

One way this gap manifests in the outskirts of Yangon is as a boom of land speculation and development. The little plots of land that the villagers have been using for rental house lots or for agriculture are being bought and sold for ever-increasing prices. We see this all the time: one day a piece of land is cleared and big walls go up, bristling with barbed wire—and sometimes villas pop up inside the new compound. The photos above come from right next to CMMC.

When this happens, the people who've been living there have to move everything—including their homes (here, one rents the use of land, rather than a house). But because of the boom, prices have gone sky-high, and continue to escalate—not only for land but also for rent and building materials. And of course there has been no compensatory increase in wages or income. So when families have to dismantle their houses and rebuild elsewhere, they may be faced with an impossible economic situation.



Just a week ago, one of the most dedicated volunteer helpers at the monastery came to Sayadaw in tears, because this had happened to her family. The landlord had sold the land out from under them, and there was no way they could afford the cost of moving. Sayadaw asked us to help, and it was an easy decision to offer her a donation for this. You can see the relief and joy on her face—and for us it was a wonderful way to give back a little support for the immense amount of work she offers every day. We know that there are many others in similar straits, and with the dāna we have this year, we look forward to making more eyes glisten with tears of happiness.

As the years roll on, we are beginning to see how one small donation can ripple out and become amplified, touching many more lives than we could have originally imagined. It's incredibly moving, and very inspiring. So from all of us, and on behalf of the countless beings who have benefitted from your kindness this year, we deeply thank you. We hope your generosity brings as much joy to you as it did to those who received it!

More Images from 2011~Joy to the World!



Daw Vīrañṇī
Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre
December 8, 2011