

The Laydaungkan Nunneries



Some impressions from Laydaungkan, Mingaladon Twonship, Yangon

What was once upon a time a village with people growing vegetables has become a crowded suburb with many rentals for people working in the nearby factories (for example: sewing clothes or producing beer). The many nunneries and monasteries are still nestled between the houses, but the neighbourhood is no longer as peaceful, laid-back, and quiet as it has been 15 years ago.

Laydaungkan is the neighbourhood around the Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Center (CMMC) where I stayed during the three weeks in January 2025. It was founded by Sayadaw U Indaka and was the ‘home’ for Ayya Virañani and me for many years. After Cyclone Nargis hit Lower Burma in 2009, we walked around in the neighbourhood and noticed many nunneries that were badly damaged. This was the beginning of our support for many of these nunneries. At that time, the basic need was to repair their buildings which were mostly made of bamboo or wood. In the following years, we supported them in building proper toilets, shower areas, and kitchens, expanding the buildings to accommodate the growing number of nuns, facilitating educational and health issues, buying books for studying, or constructing a new building. A constant concern for most nuns is getting enough support for food to feed all the mostly young nuns. They can eat enormous amounts of rice!

A common topic of conversation is how much rice they have to cook for all the nuns every day. For example: for the 43 nuns at the Kyesinaye Nunnery they cook 5 viss or 8 kg of rice every day for the two meals, breakfast and lunch. This means that each nun eats about 185 grams of rice every day!

Dhammagonwei Nunnery



“This is Dhammagonwei Nunnery Abbess. We are very grateful to Daw Ariya, Daw Vīrañānī and all the sponsoring Dhamma Friends and yogis because we can spend your annual donations for all the requisites. We are happy that you have helped fulfill the requisites. Every day when we pray, we send our Metta to Daw Ariya, Daw Vīrañānī, and all the noble yogis and donors to be healthy, happy, and attain the Noble Wisdom. We all nuns wish, ‘May you always support the Noble Sāsana.’”

With last year’s dāna they built a **water pipe** to connect with the government water pipeline. Now they can get water all the time. There is no more need to wait for electricity (coming for 4 hours and then it is off for 8 hours) to pump the water from the well.

Mingalagonwei Nunnery



The nunnery in 2009 ...



... and in 2025



Reflection before eating lunch

With last year’s dāna, they were able to build the roof on the second floor of the building. With this year’s dāna, they will build the walls, windows, and ceiling on the upper floor. It will have three rooms (for the nuns) and a big hall for studying and praying.

Laputta Nunnery



Daw Uttama with the orphan and Daw Uttara

“Daw Uttara and Daw Uttama were so compassionate to adopt an orphan baby who is now 1 year and 8 months old. When she was brought to the nunnery, she was only 2 months old and very weak; everyone thought that she would die soon.

The baby’s parents died a few weeks after birth and her grandmother took care of her. As her grand- mother was a wood-collector and very poor, she could not give her Dumex or

suitable milk powder. She gave her PEP milk powder which is very cheap but not suitable for an infant. Daw Uttara and Daw Uttama’s dad was originally from Ywar Thar Gyi Village near Sagaing. Their relatives informed the two sisters about the orphan baby and asked them to adopt her.

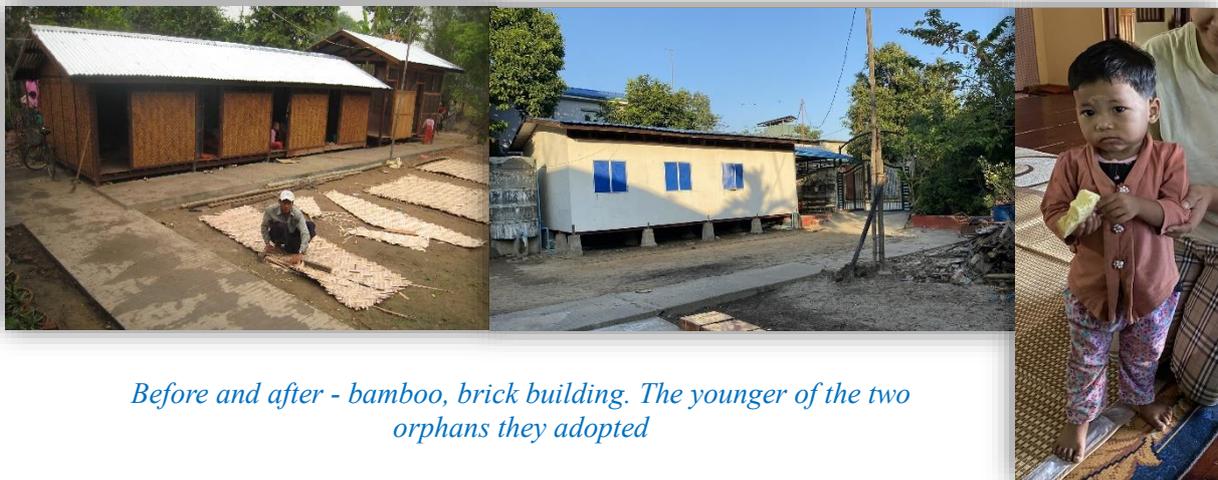
At that time, Daw Uttama, the younger sister, was suffering from an illness and was very weak. But she urged her older sister Daw Uttara to go and rescue the baby. Daw Uttara travelled to the remote hill and forest area to the west of Mingun Village (Upper Burma) where she met the baby and could legally adopt her. Soon after the baby arrived at the nunnery, Daw Uttama’s health improved and she was doing well.

I was told a something very strange: When the baby was born, she had a placenta like a sash over her forehead, which looked like the forehead of an elephant. The nuns believe that she will become an outstanding nun serving the Sāsanā when she grows up.”

[As told by Mora, slightly edited]



Sasanaramsi Nunnery



Before and after - bamboo, brick building. The younger of the two orphans they adopted



The other orphan (photo on left) is a bit older but very shy. It was very obvious that the other nuns and the lay helper love these two little girls. Although they have no family, they are growing up in a big Dhamma family and are always surrounded by people. They urgently need to repair the toilet roof before the monsoon starts and do some other repairs to the main building.

Chanmyay Tharyar Nunnery



Some of the nuns - the new accommodation under construction - a nun looking out of the window

Daw Rupa Siṅgī is the abbess of this nunnery where 24 nuns are residing. A few days after she received the dāna, she wrote,

“On behalf of the nuns at Chanmyay Tharyar Nunnery I express my heartfelt gratitude for the donation we have received from the Metta In Action group represented by Daw Virañani and Daw Ariya and all the international yogis and donors. We are very pleased and feel extremely happy. Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu!!!

Every year you come and ask what we need, without forgetting us. Your continuous support has enabled us to continue on this Sāsana journey. This year’s donation will be used to build the roof of the new accommodation for the nuns. May all donors and members of MIA be happy and well in both body and mind. May you be able to continue these virtuous deeds of supporting the Sāsana.”

Mya Thita Oo Nunnery





The new wooden floor



Chanting a beautiful blessing

Once again, I was impressed by how tidy and clean they keep the nunnery! Daw Sucari and her 16 nuns take great care of the buildings and surroundings. They also have a couple of vegetable gardens to supplement their meals with water cress, sour leaves, aubergines, and beans. The new wooden floor was done with last year’s donation. As you can see in the picture, it is spic & span!

They also want to build a water pipe connecting it to the government water pipeline so they can get water all the time (like the nuns did at Dhammagonwei Nunnery). Also, the barbed wire around their compound needs to be completed so they feel safe and protected.

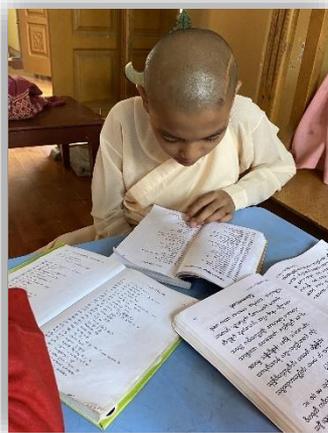
After offering the donation, they chanted a beautiful blessing. I was greatly touched and the eyes started watering.

Saranagonyee Nunnery

“The school received the donation of (12,500,000 Kyats) donated by the Mettashin group and all the donors with great joy. With that money, we will continue to install water pipelines, run lights, build water tanks, and paint the attached school for nuns that is still under construction. Therefore, we are very grateful to all the international donors. I would like to thank you very much. I would like to send you a prayer that you will be able to increase the effort even more and continue to donate. Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu 🙏🙏🙏.



P.S: When the building is completed (left below), it is planned to open a nun-only school on June 1st, 2025.”



Sukhacari Nunnery

Daw Aye Cari is responsible for 85 nuns who live in the nunnery and 3 nuns who study at the Shwe U Min Center. Some of the nuns come from remote areas of Burma. They usually visit their families during the long school holidays in March & April. However, due to armed conflicts, especially in the border regions, some of the young nuns have not been able to visit their families for three years. In addition, travel costs have become very high. The big need is support for the education of all the nuns. With last year's dāna they built the wall around the compound of the nunnery.



The new wall - the nuns doing their homework - with Daw Aye Cari in front of the big Bodhi Tree

Chanmyaygonyee Nunnery



Daw Gandhama (photo on left) could not resist taking in some refugee girls from Upper Burma (Monywa and Shan State) where the schools had been burnt down, even though the space in the nunnery is already quite crowded. They urgently need a new building to accommodate all the nuns. A sponsor had donated a little pickup truck to them so that they can drive to downtown Yangon for their alms round and save the expensive bus ticket. She talked to me about her Dhamma studies, how she established the nunnery, her duties to the nuns, her struggles to take care of everything and everybody, and her dedication to do what she is doing. It was obvious to me that she is doing everything wholeheartedly despite the many challenges.



The place for the new building



The pickup truck



Sandals



“Mingalaba, Mettashin Aphwe [MIA group]
 May all the donors be healthy and happy.
 May all their wishes be fulfilled.
 May everything go well with you and success to you all.
 Special thanks for all your support and dānas.”
 (Daw Paññasirī, Paññasīngī Monastic School)

Ariya Baumann, March 2025