

Lives Shaken and Shattered



Grandmothers with their grand children at the Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Center in Pyinsar (Upper Burma)

The lives of many people in Myanmar have been shaken and shattered, either by the ongoing political unrest and the resulting economic difficulties or by the devastating earthquake just over a year ago, in March 2025.



A father with his daughter

Since January 2023, many people from Thaleba, Sayadaw U Indaka's native village, where we have supported many projects over the years, have been unable to remain in their village following heavy fighting and the destruction of many houses.

Since they had nowhere else to go, they found refuge in the meditation centers of Sayadaw U Indaka in Yangon, Takon (near the capital Naypyidaw) and Pyinsar (near Pyin Oo Lwin, Upper Burma), as well as in the large Maha Myaing Monastery in Mandalay, where Sayadaw U Indaka's brother is the head monk.

This year we were able to travel to Pyinsar and stay at the meditation center. A total of 86 refugees (IDP, Internally Displaced People) from Thaleba live there, all of whom long to return to their village and work as farmers in the fields again. A mother told us that she was pregnant when they had to flee. Her young son is now growing up at the meditation center and takes it for his home, as he has never seen ‘his’ village.



Makeshift kitchens

however, this only happens occasionally. Some of the older men take care of the fruit trees and vegetables in the center or sweep the grounds.



An elderly man sweeping the grounds



The refugees live in a kind of limbo. Nothing is as it used to be; the familiar daily life of their village is gone. Since arriving at the center, they have had to readjust drastically. The older women spend most of their days sitting, taking a short walk around the grounds, or looking after the young children. The mothers do all the housework, such as cooking, washing clothes, and cleaning. Some fathers and young men have found work in the area, helping farmers, chopping wood along the highway (and given the permission to take it to the center), driving cars, or working on construction sites. The younger women can earn some money by picking fruit or harvesting vegetables;



Wood that needs to be cut, for cooking

The children go to school in Pyinsar, with the older students participating in distance learning. And the younger children play together. In front of the gate, they have a small soccer field. When I saw the flat ball they were playing with, I bought a good one on a trip to Mandalay. Now they can finally play decent soccer matches on the dusty soccer field.



*Above: The CMMC soccer team with the new ball, two girls are part of the team
Left: The dusty soccer field*



Celebrating the 18th birthday. No big party but a sweet way to mark this auspicious day

Although their basic needs – food, shelter, clothing and medicine – are met, they long for the day of their return, even though much has been destroyed and much needs to be rebuilt. At present it does not look like much will change in the near future. But people strongly believe that things *will* change, that things *must* change.

When the refugees arrived at the meditation center – with nothing but the cloths they were wearing – they were able to eat in the dining hall; all meals were offered to them. However, feeding 86 additional people daily is costly. Due to high inflation and Myanmar’s precarious economic situation, fewer and fewer people can afford to donate to monasteries and meditation centers. Given these circumstances, Sayadaw U Indaka informed the refugees that they would have to prepare their own meals unless the person donating a meal at the center included them.

always a major undertaking. This year, we decided to offer cash so they could use it for their needs – whether for food, medicine, clothing, or toothpaste.

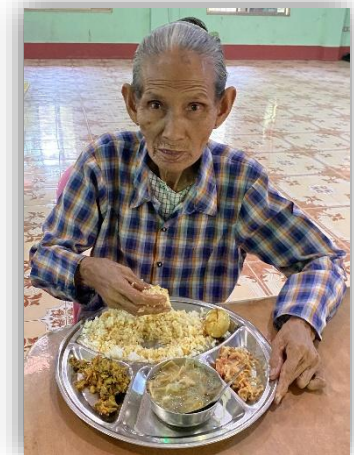
Each person received 400’000 Kyats (85 Euros), from the youngest toddler to the oldest grandmother.

In the last couple of years, MIA has offered rice and oil to the refugees. Packing the rice bags and bottling the oil was





The meals are always offered to the Buddha first



The refugees enjoy a meal in the dining hall. Before eating, they always recite a mettā blessing for the donors of the meals.

The gratitude of the refugees, nuns, monks, and all the other recipients for the support received – thanks to people like YOU – is immeasurable. After every dāna, the merits were dedicated and shared with all the donors and all living beings. And not only that: we received so many presents as tokens of appreciation – I wish we could all come together to enjoy the local treats, drink the Burmese coffee, and share these gifts with you!



Many different kinds of fruits



A homemade chickpea snack



Left: fried soya and butter beans, peanuts, Above: Burmese coffee

Lapet (pickled tealeaves), dried bananas



Some of the Nwe Kwe nuns made these plastic baskets during Covid



Coffee, cookies, soaps, toothpaste, mosquito repellent



Homemade waffles, mandarins, grapes

Following the devastating earthquake in March 2025, MIA provided immediate assistance to four nunneries in Sagaing: the distribution of basic food supplies and financial support for the construction of emergency shelters.
 See *MIA Emergency Relief 2025* (vipassana-metta.com/en/social-projects/social-projects-burma)



Later, together with the help of some other donors, we were able provide further funds for the demolition of the badly damaged buildings and their reconstruction.
 What follows are mostly the pictures of the Thit Sein Nunnery to give you an impression of the progress of the work.



ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါသည်

Thank you!



With mettā, Ariya Baumann
May 2026