

DECEMBER 2020



# Friends of Sanon

Changing Lives, Building a Future for Myanmar Youth



## Mingalaba

Welcome to Sanon's December newsletter, we hope our news finds you and your loved ones well and safe.

At the end of the year it is not unusual to look back and reflect upon what has occurred. It was a year that not any of us could have foretold. Plans and events have been delayed, postponed or cancelled; many people's lives have been put on hold due to the global pandemic. Life at Sanon for us is on hold for the lives of our students and restaurant staff. This month we are bringing to you an insight into life away from Sanon and a special update and insight into the life of Sanon restaurant manager Lim. He has returned to working on his farm outside of Yangon.

Sanon's students, whose training has been postponed, have returned to their loved ones in various villages in regional Myanmar and generally are helping



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with their family farms in order to sustain themselves during this time. There is little or no government aid or other financial support in Myanmar. Sanon's Trustees are keeping some staff and students supplied with financial support during this time of very high unemployment. For the above reasons this is why we ask every month if you can consider a supporting donation

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**Can you help to support us to support them?**

*Sanon trustees want to continue to change young people's lives and build their futures.*

## **Sanon back story - why we do what we do**

Farming in Myanmar is not only an occupation but is essential for people living outside of the towns and cities to sustain themselves. 70 % of Myanmar's population live in rural areas, and agriculture is still the largest sector of the economy. The dominant features of the Myanmar Dry Zone in which Bagan is situated includes erratic rainfall, soil with low nutrient content and high temperatures. The majority of the people depend on agriculture and with the ever changing climatic conditions it can make for hard living. It is from these areas that we at Sanon work alongside the social workers in selecting and recruiting our students. Without the opportunity of Sanon the students who come to us for their training would have little option but to stay in the villages and help support their families via farming to maintain a subsistence living.



Working at Sanon provides them with an income they mostly send home to their families leaving them with enough for themselves. Student's food, accommodation, uniforms and even their graduation clothing is provided for them. That is what is so important for us at Sanon - providing an opportunity for these disadvantaged and underprivileged youths where one didn't exist.

Thanks to the ongoing support of our restaurant customers over the years we have continued to support the opportunities for our students but their families too.

Back to Lim and his farm. Lim is currently growing Morning glory and jasmine; two important crops here. He has spent time clearing his plot of bamboo and trees for a chicken coop which he is currently constructing for his hens he will buy in the New Year. He is taking great pride in showing off his gourds and his Roselle leaf crop. Roselle leaf soup is a traditional favourite amongst Burmese and is on the Sanon menu. As much as he is enjoying working here Lim is extremely keen to return to his role of Sanon Restaurant project manager, a role he misses very much.

## Plan now travel later

Let's turn to our plan now travel later features and look at another bucket list idea which for December the Hot air balloon industry. Before this industry came to Bagan a traditional balloon festival was long established in Taunggyi and takes place in November as part of the festival of Lights coinciding with the full moon. It is known as the fire balloon festival, no one rides in these balloons as they are full of fire! A spectacular event culminating in an array of huge paper balloons, filled with light and fire hovering above in the sky and at the same time surrounded by fireworks.



Bagan has become the No. 1 tourist spot for hot air ballooning in Myanmar. Ballooning allows the tourist to take in the full view of the Bagan Plains with its vast expanse of Pagodas and Temples in what is now a World Heritage Site. What to expect? Expect to enjoy a spectacular hot air balloon ride over the temples of ancient city, Bagan. The exciting thing is that every balloon flight is different. You will see Bagan waking up in the morning. You will see many temples in the distance and get a spectacular aerial view of ancient Bagan. Sometimes you may fly over villages and see people on their early morning rounds, feeding their animals; or going to market. It is an amazing and interactive experience.

You will fly above most of the 3,500 the temples and stupas below which are astounding for their sheer beauty and diversity whilst enjoying the extraordinary serenity of Bagan during sunrise. It will also be possible to have an afternoon flight for sunset.

The breath-taking views of stupas appearing through the delicate mist are quite unforgettable. You'll see far more temples flying than you would in some days by foot. Moreover, to the one side there's the mighty Irrawaddy River (*The road to Mandalay*) to the other—the volcanic Mt. Popa to the east and —below the smiling and excited local children, traditional houses and households of the Burmese people. It's important to remember that ballooning is seasonal, which means that they only operate from October-March. If you are going to Myanmar during any other month, then the balloons will be closed.

Could you donate to Sanon Training Restaurant to support us in supporting our furloughed staff and our students whose training is suspended? We are supporting students' families with money to buy cooking oil and rice on a monthly basis. Sanon training restaurant has been closed for 9 months, we would naturally generate 85% of our income, and we now have **Can you support us to support them?** Thank you. If you've enjoyed reading this email let us know if you think someone else will why not send it on to them

**Thank you for all your continued support . All the team at Sanon**

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