

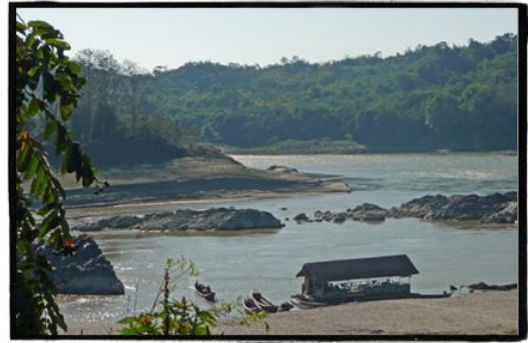
## Visit to Myanmar

In January 2010, I visited Myanmar (Burma) as part of my annual country program visit. I was able to visit one remote diocese after three previous attempts, and the four days there proved to be the highlight of my trip.

January is generally a cool month in Myanmar but it was much cooler in the north than Yangon. There were also more varieties of fruit and vegetables available compared to 'Lower Burma.' Practically all of its parishes have day-care centres or pre-schools, connecting the church to the community as many of the children attending the centres are not Anglicans. Some of these centres also provide income for the parishes.

In addition to regular diocesan staff, they also have two trainers and one agriculturist. One staff member has had a lot of experience implementing projects. He still remembers a former ABM staff who worked with them more than 10 years ago, in building their capacity and putting together some of their early projects.

The current bishop is one of the most respected senior leaders of the church and visiting his diocese, I began to realize the reasons for this respect. I was able to experience and hear firsthand of the many programs and activities within the diocese. Meeting with diocesan staff and visiting parishes, it was evident that things were getting done. There was a feeling of optimism, especially from diocesan staff who were generally younger than I expected.



*This place is called 'the confluence' where two rivers join to become the Irrawaddy River. This place may be gone forever soon as there is a dam being constructed in the area right now. (Photo: Lina Magallanes/ABM 2010)*



*When I arrived, there was a one week training workshop for new catechists run by the diocesan staff themselves at the new training centre. (Photo: Lina Magallanes/ABM 2010)*

The recurring theme that I heard from church leaders within CPM – clergy and lay alike – was the concern for the future of its young people. The diocese started a basic computer skills course and more than 70 young people have attended the course run by the youth desk in the last 12 months. The diocese will be connected to the internet soon and this will help encourage more youth to participate in this program, and improve communication for the diocese within Myanmar and with the outside world.

The bishop is also concerned by problems associated with drugs and HIV-AIDs. He had sent some young people to the hospital for treatment but the cost was enormously expensive. (A local organization partnering with the 3D Fund is renting space in the diocesan compound and is doing what it can to help address this growing problem.)

I was overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality of the people. There was a presentation night organized for my benefit on the third night I was there. Close to a hundred people turned up, huddled in very warm clothes to ward off the evening chill. It seemed most parishes have their own dance groups, as about 6 different groups (each one from a different parish), danced in their ethnic costumes. It was so beautiful. I felt so privileged. This was definitely one of the most unforgettable trips I've ever had.

**Lina Magallanes**  
**South East Asia Program Coordinator**



*Lina Magallanes in Myanmar*