



The Village Leader

Than Kyi always wanted to help her fellow villagers, but she never thought she'd be in charge of her village. Follow her journey to become one of Myanmar's few women leaders.



The Village Leader
Alyson Curro



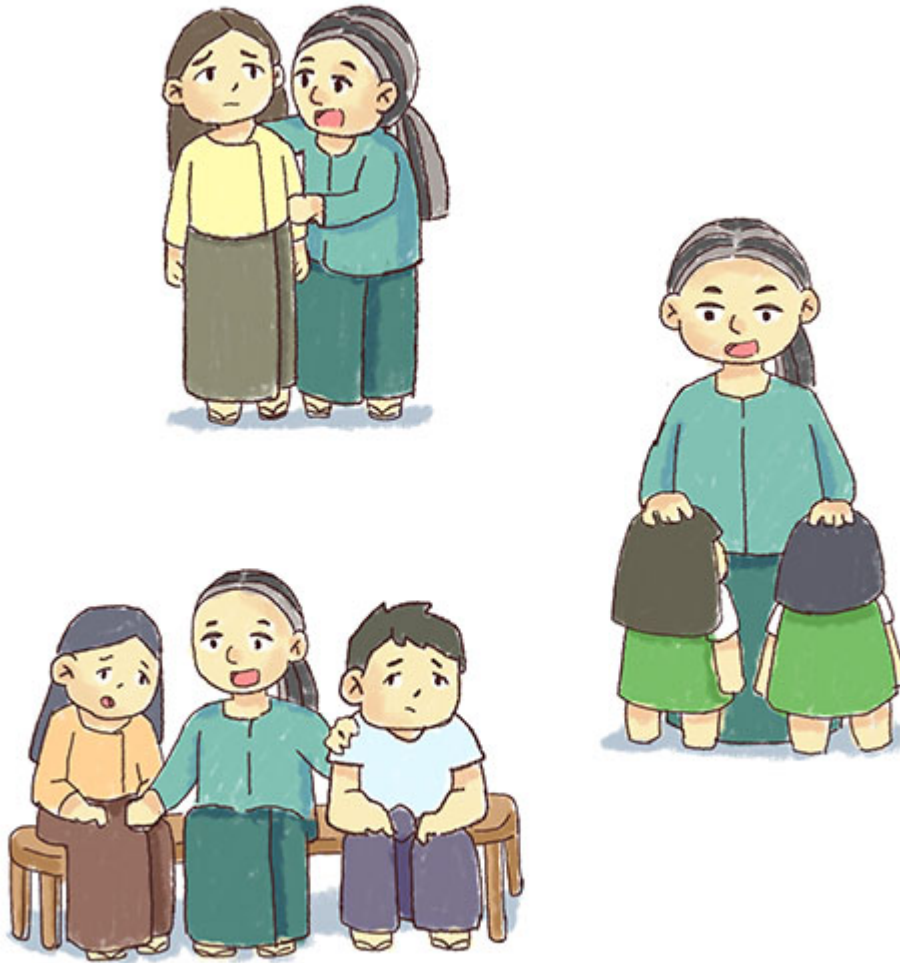
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Little Than Kyi daydreamed about opening big grocery stores. She imagined many aisles with many shelves filled with every food, drink, and sweet she had ever heard of. This was her dream, because after years of conflict, there was not much of anything in her Kayah village, including food.



Than Kyi never opened a grocery store, but she did find other ways to support her village. She spent many years helping women and children, and resolving family arguments.



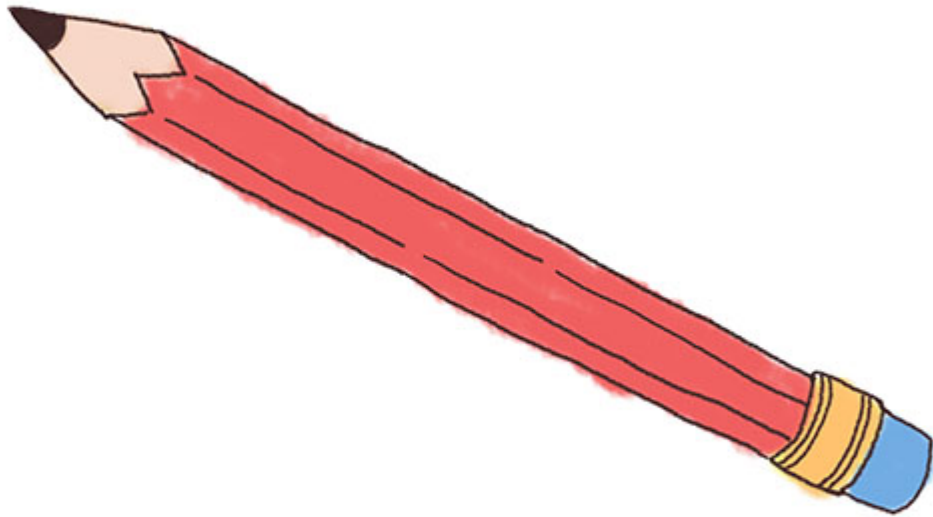
Then one day, it was time to elect a new leader of the village. To Than Kyi's surprise, the entire village wanted her to be their leader. At first, Than Kyi said no—she had six children in school, and being the leader did not pay much. But the villagers insisted. They trusted her. Than Kyi felt it was her duty, so at age 45, she became her village's leader.



Than Kyi does two big things in her job. First, she listens to her villagers' problems, and she finds a way to fix them. Second, she represents her village in important meetings with the government. She tells the government her village needs better roads, markets, and public spaces for young people.



Than Kyi is the only female village leader in all of Kayah State. In fact, she is one of the very few Myanmar women serving as village and ward leaders. The good news is that more and more women are getting involved and are showing that they, too, can be great leaders. "This is not a man's job. A woman can do this job just as well," Than Kyi often says. "I am proof."



Use these prompts to write your own story on a piece of paper. When are you happiest? What do you love doing? Life can be tough sometimes. Describe a tough moment in your life that you overcame. Tell a story of your future. What do you dream of doing?



On a piece of paper, draw your portrait.

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