



No. 1, Thit-ta-bway Quarter
Yenangyaung
Magway Division
Myanmar



Guest House +95 (0)60 88 21620
Mobile +95 (0)9 505 3342
ept.pet@gmail.com
www.leithargone-guesthouse.com

LEI THAR GONE
Guest House

September 15th 2023 / Trimester Report II / Mai – August 2023

Dear friends,

«Life at Light of Love and Lei Thar Gone remains extremely challenging.»

Unfortunately, the situation in Myanmar continues to deteriorate and I only repeat the observations made in my previous reports...

The regime appears to have given up on the economy. Instead, it points its finger at the civilian government it ousted. People are complaining about soaring food prices. The currency has plunged and inflation has surged. Traders are struggling with volatile currency-exchange rates. Rolling blackouts are occurring countrywide. This all happened after the coup. Turning a blind eye to this fact will not change the reality that the junta cannot even deliver power.

On July 31st, Myanmar's regime again violated the military-drafted 2008 Constitution and extended the state of emergency for another six months. This fourth consecutive extension will once more delay the elections the military had vowed to hold by the end of the year. Also in July, the junta-controlled Central Bank of Myanmar issued higher denomination 20,000-kyat notes (double the previous highest 10'000-kyat note), which led to further depreciation of the Kyat and to even greater price increases of basic foodstuffs, electricity and petrol. Examples:

1 litre of milk was 4'500 kyats and is now 8'000 kyats (\$3.80)

1 viss (= 1.68 kilograms) cooking oil was 10'000 kyats and is now 13'000 kyats (\$6.20)

1 egg was 220/230 kyats and is now 300/320 kyats (\$0.15)

1 pack (500 sheets) of inferior quality copy paper is now 12'000 (\$5.70) Tissues (in the omnipresent boxes) and toilet paper have also become extremely expensive.

1 litre of petrol 95 octane was 1800/2000 and is now 2500/2600 (\$1.25), diesel was 2200/2300 and is now 2700/2900 (\$1.35)

With daily wage earners receiving approximately 5'000 Kyats for work-day, food security has become a major challenge for many families.

For those who are interested in a more in-depth view of the current situation, here a few links to relevant articles:

Global Indices Record Myanmar's Rapid Decline Under Junta Rule

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/global-indices-record-myanmars-rapid-decline-under-junta-rule.html>

Sitting Buddha at Nay Pi Taw & megalomania of Min Aung Hlaing

<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/his-sins-cant-be-erased-junta-leader-to-consecrate-buddha-image/>

Min Aung Hlaing and yadaya, his magic rituals

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rituals-and-yadaya-myanmar-junta-leaders-superstition-knows-no-bounds.html>

Terrible news of a cyclone approaching...

On May 14th Cyclone Mocha made landfall near Sittwe in Rakhine State as a category 4 tropical cyclone, bringing winds of up to 250 km/h, heavy rains, storm surges, flash floods, and landslides. It was the strongest cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in the last 10 years, and caused devastating damage to people's homes, infrastructure, and power and water services.



In Yenangyaung, the cyclone did not hit directly, but huge amounts of rain fell and caused great damage. Here at Light of Love, the damage can clearly be seen. It was very dangerous because the foundation of the old retaining wall, which is close to the main building was damaged, so it was necessary to act urgently. And so, ensure the safety of all the children, returning to Light of Love for the new school year on June 1st.





The entire retaining wall was rebuilt. Because of the instable soil, the workers first had to dig down 5 ft. down (1.52m) until they reached solid rock and a firm foundation. They lay rebars (Armierungseisen / barres d'armature) and used quantities of cement to stabilize the construction.

Reconstruction at Light of Love cost a total of 12'200'000 Kyats (\$5'800)

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Marc Heintz and the members of Förderverein Kinderhilfe Birma as well as to Patrick Pesenti and the donors of Solidar'Birmanie for their generous extra support in this challenging situation! We very much appreciate your loyalty to Light of Love and the children!

Construction nearing completion, Light of Love opened on schedule. The children were happy to return to school. The trainee teachers from P.S.I.E. were enthusiastic. However, for some grades, text books were missing – even the government schools didn't receive them on time. And so, Light of Love, not figuring on any government priority list, didn't get them either. Classes started anyway and later, Zoe and Eileen managed to buy them on the black market.

Meanwhile enrolment is complete and there are currently 140 Students attending the school (of which 30 are paying students) There are classes from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (although there is currently no Grade 6)

Zoe has plans for opening a pre-school (which must now be separate from the main school) The grant for the plot ownership is pending. Once the ownership is official, an application for a pre-school license can be submitted.

Julian, Lyon's son started 1st grade and enjoyed the day with 14 other children in his class and with Daw Aye Min Khaing as his teacher.



Assemblies on Monday now begin with short speeches about topics related to school and education in general. During the first assembly of the school year, the topic was “Aims of Education.” The questions the children were asked were: why are we coming to school? / why are we studying? / why is education necessary for us? The children have time to reflect on the questions and discuss their thoughts. One child per class presents their results to the entire assembly.

Such pedagogically valuable exercises are a result of the training Zoe and the other (trainee) teachers receive at P.S.I.E (Pinya Sanyae Institute of Education) in Yangon.



The young group currently teaching at LOL (Zoe is on the right)



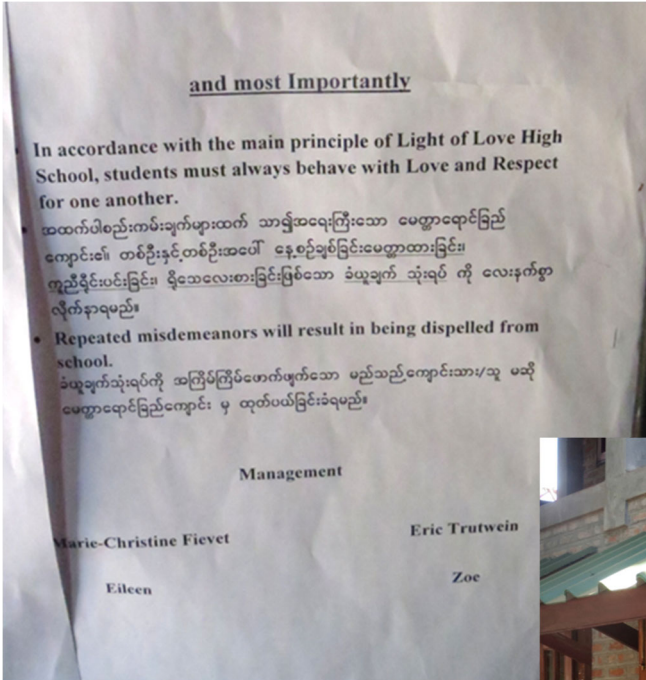
Creative activities are possible and encouraged Here a sketch by a Grade 12 student drawn for an Art Competition, held in June

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT....??

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Light of Love! 10 years ago – back in July 2013 (one month later than normal, because of license issues) the school opened as one of only two private schools in Magway Division!

In the beginning...

an unheard-of vision, hard-work, perseverance, commitment, patience and unlimited love....



Now, ten years later, it's time to celebrate....



So many lives have been touched and changed, so many children have received desperately needed love, care, attention and an education, which will help them break out of the poverty cycle and enable them to stand on their own two feet and provide for themselves and their families.

Nota bene:

The celebration was well deserved – on 25th August, a group of inspectors from the Magway region, and three days before, on the 22nd a first group of inspectors from Magway Division came and checked everything: office work, teaching part and infrastructure. Both groups were pleased with the results and they left no negative comments!

We would like to thank the staff, teachers and students for their collaboration, cooperation and performance! Super! Eric would be so proud of you all!!

As each month, birthdays at Light of Love are celebrated, demonstrating to each child (and teacher) that he/she is loved, respected and a part of the Light of Love Family

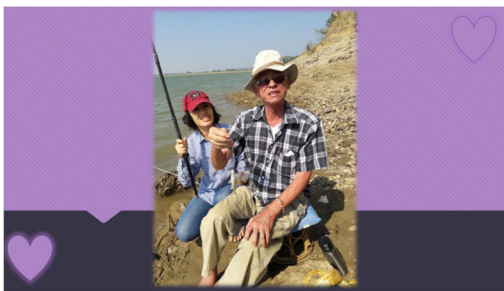


In August, there was a special celebration, as on the 25th it would have been Eric's 78th birthday!



It was touching to read the messages and see the drawings the children made for Eric – although he has passed away, he lives on in the hearts and lives of those he left behind!

The younger children or new students however didn't know Eric, so for the birthday celebration, Zoe put together a Power Point presentation, so as to help them understand who Eric was, appreciate his vision, recognise the benefits they are reaping and show them the development of Light of Love over the years.



Meanwhile at Lei Thar Gone Guest House

As with LOL, the situation at the Guest House still remains very challenging – mainly due to the absence of guests, or otherwise said – the absence of income, as well as ever-present maintenance work.

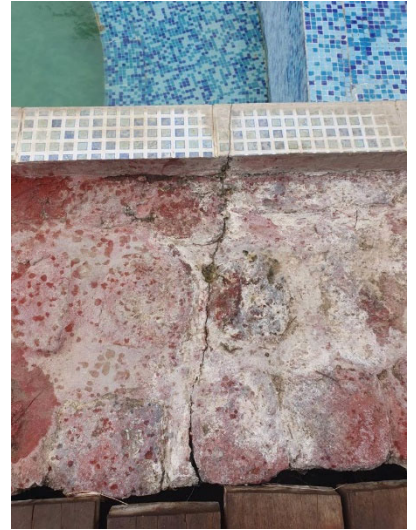
Lyon says it this way: “I’m trying to stay afloat and move on” which means trying to survive while focussing on the future, even if it seems to be in the very distant future...

Even though, there are very few to no guests, Lyon optimistically foresees the future, when visitors will appreciate a shady spot to relax and read or sit with a cold drink and chat. He personally designed this nice area and had the workers construct it – and with it, eliminating a problem in an area of the garden where plants just didn’t thrive, no matter the effort.



Damage from Cyclone Mocha was also extensive on the Guest House side.

Because of the geological features and composition of the rock, the area is extremely prone to erosion. To ensure stability, the retaining walls have to be regularly surveyed and checked.



After Cyclone Mocha, Lyon inspected the entire Lei Thar Gone compound and found that the huge retaining wall, supporting the pool area had been damaged and needed to be reconstructed.

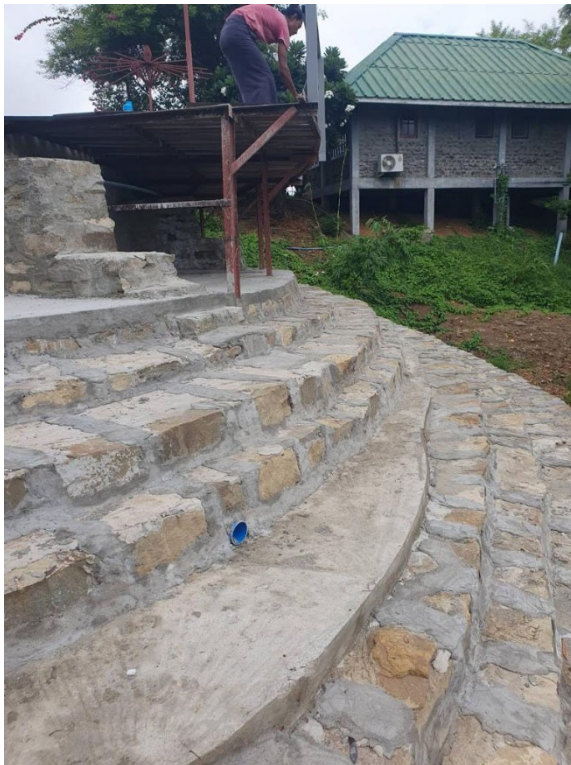
A massive task!!



As on the Light of Love side, the workers had to dig far down to reach unshifting, solid rock. Then rebar (Armierungseisen / barres d'armature) were laid and together with large rocks and quantities of cement, the retaining wall was rebuilt.



The new retaining wall



Reconstruction was a tedious, back-breaking and very costly undertaking! The total price, including material (which has become very expensive due to shortages caused by the coup) and labour amounted to 20'000'000 Kyats (\$9'600)

A huge investment without any obvious returns...

(Except of course that Lei Thar Gone hasn't slid down the slope)

This report was written by Therese, in collaboration with Zoe & Lyon