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LEI THAR GONE
Guest House

October 7th 2022 / Belated Trimester Report II / May - August 2022

Dear friends,

Life at Light of Love and Lei Thar Gone remains extremely challenging because of the frightful economic, political and social situations that the entire country is forced to endure. It is very difficult to accomplish even the smallest of administrative tasks. One is passed on in an endless loop to yet another department by the clerks at the government offices. The banking and financial sectors are particularly challenging – the exchange rates are erratic, as an article on 2nd September in Frontier Myanmar clearly documents:

The kyat resumed its wild slide against the US dollar this week, momentarily falling to at least K4,100 to \$1 on the black market before rebounding to around K3,100 today. The official exchange rate, however, has remained at K2,100 to the dollar since the junta raised it from K1,850 in August.

The pre-coup value of the kyat sat, with remarkable stability, at around the K1,300-1,400 mark and economic activity is unlikely to be reinvigorated while current conditions remain.

New regulations and laws are imposed randomly. Light of Love, for example has a licence, valid until March 2024. Now, for no apparent reason and with no explanation, Zoe as well as 12 other license holders of private schools in the Magway Division, received a letter from the Ministry of Education and were told that they had to resubmit an application for a new license immediately. This entails a week of extra work for Zoe and she must return to Yenangyaung and so interrupt her training at PSYIE in order to apply for/renew this licence in person in Magway. Calls from Lyon to explain the situation were not successful and absolutely no understanding was shown by the authorities. You can surely imagine how frustrating and maddening this and many similar incidents are!

Nevertheless, life goes on and there are positive & happy events to report:

- **Light of Love reopened on June 1st for all grades.**
We would like to pause at this milestone and thank each and every one of our sponsors and donors, particularly Stiftung Hirten-Kinder Switzerland, Förderverein Kinderhilfe Birma Germany and Enfants-de-Birmanie France for their loyalty and continued support. Without your help, reopening LOL and providing food security for 160 children, especially during the challenging past two years, would not have been possible. *Thank you!*
- The new school year got off to a great start with 131 students enrolled. Still fewer than before Covid and the Coup but thankfully more than during the few months the school was open in 2021 when there were only 32 students.
- Both school buses are running again and classes are held for whole days. The children receive a freshly cooked, nourishing lunch as in pre-Covid times.
- Julian, Lyon's son, had his 6th birthday on September 1st and is now happily attending Kindergarten at LOL.



a good reason to celebrate...



- Assembly takes place once again, contributing to a sense of normalcy :-)
- All children who were not vaccinated for COVID-19 received a first injection on August 4th. This action was ordered by the government and funded by an NGO. Since then, vaccination has been completed.

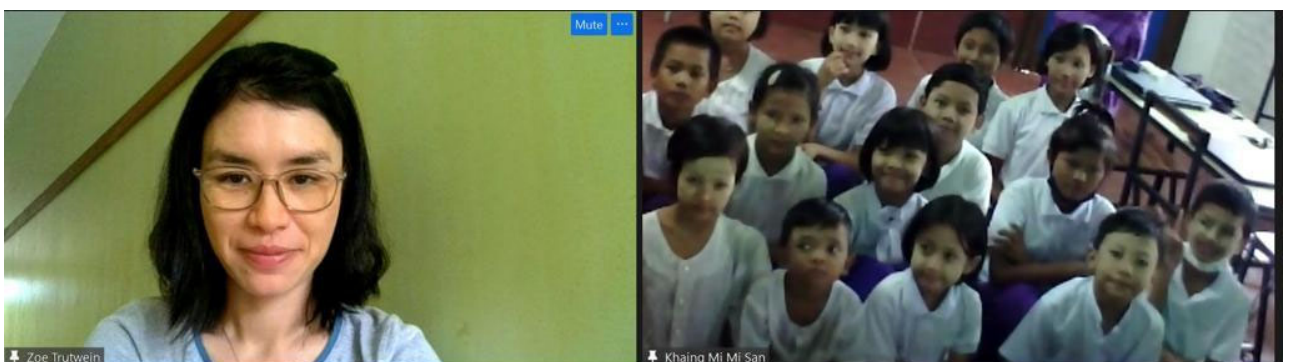


- A former volunteer teacher from France generously sponsored past LOL student, May Thazin Aung so that she was able to attend the Mornese Training Center in Anisakan, where she received a two-year formation in sewing, embroidery and life skills. She now has a sewing machine, her own small shop, does handcraft classes with the children at LOL and sews the new uniforms! An encouraging success story!
- Recently, the children were treated to Mohinga for lunch by the family of one of the students.



enjoying Mohinga, an absolute Myanmar favourite

- With the new school year, Zoe's Teacher Training classes at PSYIE switched from online to in-person training and presence lessons at the school facility in Yangon. This meant moving to Yangon, a decidedly challenging step for Zoe.
- Staying connected to LOL students even though she now lived in Yangon was a priority for Zoe because she realized that the children depended on her and needed the relationship so as to have a direct contact point for their needs and someone who would listen to their concerns and understand their perspectives. Zoe now has weekly ZOOM meetings with Primary, Middle and High School classes. An event always looked forward to by everyone!



Meanwhile at Lei Thar Gone Guest House

- The situation at the Guest House, where Lyon is responsible, remains very challenging – mainly due to the absence of guests, otherwise said – the absence of income.
- Further complicating the situation are the frequent power cuts, particularly at night. This makes it impossible to use the air conditioners, which are a **MUST** for Myanmar guests. Even in cool/cold weather the ACs are on, the guests simply ask for extra blankets. (other countries, other customs...) Unfortunately, the solar plant which would normally solve this problem is producing under 30% of maximum power due to a broken inverter which until now has been impossible to have replaced. Recently, two rooms were booked and when the power went off at night, the guests still wanted AC. Lyon had to start the generator to meet their request. In the end, the cost of the fuel amounted to 1/3 of the income.
- Exciting was the visit of an American lady who teaches English at an international school in Yangon. It felt just like «old times» – organizing our «adventure on a boat» fishing excursion for her and driving her to Salay House, not on a motorbike but by car (as motorbike ride was forbidden by the police for unspecified reasons) but Lyon took the rough motorbike track along and through the river providing her with an extra dose of adventure! It was a pleasure to read her positive feedback!

 JackieBennett
Yangon (Rangoon), Myanmar • 17 contributions

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Wonderful Time

Jun 2022

Exploration Travel provided an intensely interesting, flexible and safe experience to Bagan, Yenangyaung and Salay in this precarious time. The guides were experts and catered to my needs, providing invaluable insights into the local culture and history. I toured pagodas, went fishing on the Irawaddy, took a bike trip to a monastery, talked with lots of locals, stayed one night in a lovely guesthouse (Le Thar Gone) that was attached to a private high school, and then two nights in an idyllic setting at Salay River View Inn. As a solo female traveler, I felt very cared for and protected as all the logistics were smoothly tended to. One highlight of my trip was the wonderful young women at Salay House who took me on tours around the town, allowing me access to places I wouldn't have known were there. Like inside of a lacquered Buddha! I would book another trip with Exploration Travel without hesitation.

[Read less](#) ^

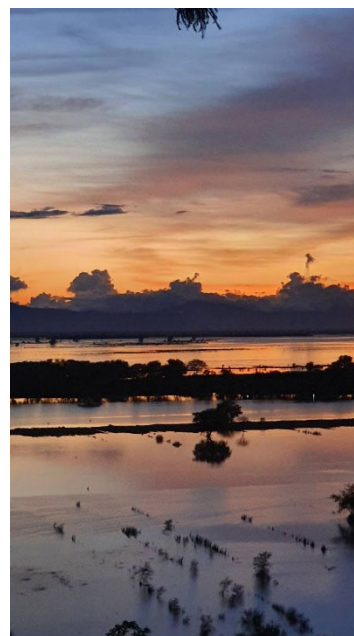


Written June 14, 2022

This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC.

- In spite of the difficult situation and many challenges, we maintain the guesthouse, looking after the grounds, keeping the pool blue and training new staff members so that this beautiful retreat will be ready for future guests because we are convinced that one day they will come!

View from Lei Thar Gone in July



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