Kinderhilfe BIRMA

Light of Love High School

Trimester Report II/2026 · May–August 2026 · 26 September 2026

Living with Pressure on Every Side

Over the past four months, the people of Myanmar have continued to live under pressure on many fronts. Uncertainty and economic hardship shape everyday life.

In Magway Region, home to Light of Love and Lei Thar Gone, the situation also remains tense.

At the same time, economic hardship continues to affect almost every aspect of daily life. Economists estimate inflation at 30–35%, while prices for basic imports and essential goods have risen by more than 50%. An egg now costs between 600 and 700 kyat. With manual labourers and shop assistants earning about 10,000 kyat a day, the struggle is obvious. Rising fuel prices have added another burden.

Together, these developments describe the environment in which Light of Love and Lei Thar Gone operate every day: rising costs and great uncertainty. Against this background, keeping a school and a guest house running – and providing education, work, security and some sense of normality – is a great achievement in itself. Our sincere thanks and admiration go to Zoe and Lyon for their determined perseverance and unwavering commitment despite the many challenges they face.





At Light of Love, children and flowers bloom side by side 💜

Light of Love Updates

Preparing for the New School Year

Preparing for a new school year is always a demanding process. Long before the students arrive on the first day, classes and timetables have to be organised, teaching responsibilities assigned, materials prepared and countless practical details sorted out.

One major task was finalising the list of students for the new school year. As LOL provides education free of charge to children from disadvantaged families, selecting new students requires considerable care. The process began with an announcement on social media, through village headmen and by word of mouth, with LOL teachers, staff and students helping to spread detailed information about enrolment. Both paying students and children seeking a supported, free-of-charge place at LOL then submitted their enrolment requests. These were first screened according to the school's criteria, after which Zoe and the teachers visited the homes of potential students and met their families. This helped them identify children who genuinely needed the school's support and who were also willing and motivated to learn. After the visits, Zoe and her team reviewed the files and the notes they had made on living conditions and life circumstances. Based on their findings, they made the difficult decision about which children to contact and invite to the entrance exams. New students were then assessed to determine the grade in which they could realistically begin; age alone does not determine class placement at LOL. Finding the right starting point for each child is therefore an important – and often difficult – part of the preparation.

Ordering new school uniforms also involves considerable organisation. Each returning student receives one new set – blouses and longyis for girls, trousers and shirts for boys – and newcomers receive two. Class by class, the correct size has to be recorded for every child, the numbers totalled and an order placed.

An important final step before the school opened was the meeting for students and their parents or guardians on 28 May. The meeting emphasised that successful education depends on close cooperation between the school, the students and their families. The focus was on student behaviour and discipline, the rules of daily school life, regular attendance and commitment to learning, as well as the important role of parents and guardians in supporting their children's education. For many families, understanding and accepting these expectations is an important part of becoming involved in life at LOL, and also an essential factor in their children's success at school.

126 parents and guardians attended the meeting, while 24 were not present. They were informed separately, so that every family had the same clear foundation for the new school year.



On 28 May, parents, guardians and students gathered to hear about the expectations of LOL.

The New School Year Begins

Finally, the big day came: on 1 June, the new school year began. Light of Love welcomed 28 new students, together with three new children in the Pre-School – a total of 31 newcomers.

There were also some new faces among the teachers. Particularly welcome were three PSIE-trained teachers from Yangon, who joined LOL to complete their in-service year and gain practical classroom experience.

The new school year began with 157 students in the main school and 14 children in the Pre-School. Of these, a total of 35 are paying students, whose school fees make an important contribution towards the school's daily running costs.

Behind the students stands Zoe, tirelessly coordinating and guiding the work of the school, together with a team of 34 salaried staff. This includes not only teachers, but also kitchen staff, bus drivers, the cleaning team, and accounting and administrative staff. Together, they keep the many different parts of daily school life running and make it possible for Light of Love to provide education and support to its students.

In August, a further four children joined the Pre-School, bringing the total to 18. Seven of them are paying, as at LOL this helps cover daily costs such as cleaning, hygiene, materials and snacks. The first days, and sometimes even weeks, are often accompanied by many tears, as the Pre-School and its Montessori learning environment are completely different from what the children know from home. And at two and a half or three, some are understandably frightened at being separated from their guardians.

However, with the tender loving care of Khaing Mi Mi San and the other teachers, the children soon feel at home and really enjoy the opportunities for playful learning, as well as the healthy lunch they receive every day.



The new children on their first day …



… explore the kindergarten grounds.



Playful learning is fun …



… because it turns curiosity into knowledge.

Two young women, Ya Mon and Htoo Nandar Lin, both former LOL students, are currently in Yangon for Montessori training at PSIE. It is a huge step for them: adjusting to hostel life in Yangon, a city of about six million people, was a challenge, but they are coping well. Thanks to their good English, they have a big advantage – their ten classmates are struggling to follow the classes. From November, they will be placed at a school for three months of practical experience.

A New Hostel for the Boys

As mentioned in the last report, the guardians of seven male high-school students asked that their sons be allowed to live at Light of Love, where they feel better protected.

Meanwhile, construction of the new hostel is complete and the boys have moved into their new home, where they can live in greater security while continuing their education. Our heartfelt thanks go to Marie-Christine Fievet-Bocquet and her association *Enfants de Birmanie*, as well as to Jürgen and Margrit Pumplün and the *Hirten-Kinder Foundation*, whose generous support made this vital project possible.





Construction of the boys' hostel





An Odyssey for Textbooks

Buying textbooks for a new school year sounds like a routine task. In today's Myanmar, it can turn into an odyssey involving long journeys, a great deal of bureaucracy – and an unexpected night away from home.

On 19 June, Zoe and Helen set out for Chauk to buy the textbooks for Light of Love. The road between Yenangyaung and Chauk has become less safe, so what should have been a routine trip had to be approached with considerable caution.

For the transport, Zoe hired a covered truck and a driver recommended by Ma San Win – in the rainy season, hundreds of books had to arrive dry.

Leaving at 6:30 a.m., they reached Chauk at 7:45. Then the bureaucratic marathon began: the government office for a letter, the government bank to pay, back to the office with proof of payment, and finally on to collect the books. Nothing could be done online or in advance. LOL needed 170 sets, each containing 10–12 books depending on the grade, at a total cost of 3.8 million kyat (about US$800). Buying the books in Mandalay was not an option, as the required quantity was not available there, and they would also have cost about twice as much.

The driver brought the precious cargo back on his own. By the time everything was done, the last bus to Yenangyaung at 2:30 p.m. had gone, and Zoe and Helen were stranded in Chauk. They found a basic motel, briefly visited a famous pagoda, bought dinner and picnicked in their room. They were the only guests, the bathroom was dreadful and there was no proper bedding. They used their longyis as sheets and spent a largely sleepless night. The next day, they caught the morning bus back home.

All this for something as simple as buying school textbooks – a vivid example of what it takes just to keep Light of Love running.



10 July: the water level is rising … the brick factory had to move.

Continuing to Learn

In spite of her many daily responsibilities – teaching, coordinating and guiding the work of the school – Zoe continues to invest in her own professional development. She recently took part in the course *"Trauma-Informed Schools"*, organised by PSIE and given by specialists from Singapore. It began with online sessions and was followed by an in-person course in Yangon. The course was not only about trauma awareness; it also introduced tools to support traumatised students and to develop an SEL (social-emotional learning) curriculum. SEL builds students' skills in managing emotions, relationships and decision-making, while trauma-informed practices create safe, supportive environments in which those skills can flourish. Together, they form a whole-child approach that promotes resilience, healing and academic success.

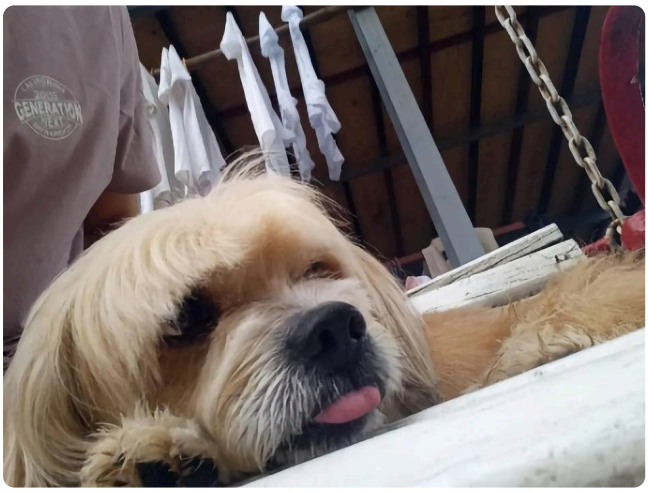
The subject is particularly relevant at Light of Love, where children often come from difficult family backgrounds affected by poverty, debt, alcohol abuse or violence, and many carry the effects of traumatic experiences with them into the classroom. Zoe found the training challenging but extremely valuable and is now preparing a course for the LOL teachers. It will cover understanding trauma, SEL, child psychology, child development and the role of memory, helping the teachers to better understand this complex subject and to work towards the mission and goals of LOL.



The course "Trauma-Informed Schools" ...



... organised by PSIE



Jack, Zoe's constant companion



Zoe's cows 😊 – if milk becomes too expensive, just buy a cow ...

Grade 12 Students Collect Plastic Waste

Grade 12 students volunteered to collect plastic waste. Activities like this raise awareness of environmental responsibility and show students that even small actions can make a positive difference in the communities where they live.



Grade 12 students volunteering to collect plastic waste

Fun and Games Day: the August Birthday Celebration

The annual birthday celebration on 25 August holds a special place in the life of Light of Love, keeping alive the memory of Eric – "Baba" to the children. This year, the celebration was accompanied by a variety of activities and competitions, including a poetry competition, a spelling bee, board games and activities for the Pre-School children. Such occasions offer much more than fun: they give students opportunities to discover their talents, build confidence, learn through friendly competition and enjoy experiences beyond the classroom. At the same time, remembering Baba helps connect today's students with the person whose vision and commitment made Light of Love possible.

A short video of the celebration



Pre-School competition



Ball game for the Pre-School children



Poetry competition



Spelling bee ...



Board game competition



Board game competition



Birthday celebration



Happy faces waiting for the bus home

Lei Thar Gone Guest House

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This report updates the progress and current operating situation at Lei Thar Gone Guest House since the previous report. The terrace is complete, the solar system continues to serve the property well, and improvements to the grounds are under way. Guest occupancy remains the main concern.

Terrace Completed

The terrace that was nearing completion in the previous report has now been finished. It provides an additional outdoor space where future guests can sit, relax and enjoy the surrounding landscape.

Current Guest Situation

At present, the guest house has no guests. The situation in Myanmar has become more difficult, and uncertainty in daily life and travel has increased. With no guest income at the moment, we are managing the property carefully while continuing essential upkeep.

Reliable Solar Electricity

The solar power system is working well and continues to provide reliable electricity for the guest house. This remains one of our most important operational strengths and helps reduce our dependence on the backup generator.

Landscaping in Progress

During this quiet period, I am upgrading the landscaping around the guest house. The work visible in the photographs includes planted garden beds, brick edging, paths, lawn areas and outdoor seating. Some of this work is still in progress. The aim is to keep Lei Thar Gone welcoming and ready for guests when conditions improve.

Looking Ahead

Our immediate priorities are to maintain the solar system and the guest house, continue the landscaping and be ready to receive guests again. The completed terrace and improved grounds are investments in the future of Lei Thar Gone, even during this difficult period.

Prepared by Yar Zar Thein (Lyon Trutwein), Lei Thar Gone Guest House

Progress in Photographs



The completed terrace and its planted setting



Outdoor seating and views across the grounds



New brick edging defines a planted garden bed.



Garden beds and lawn alongside the guest house



Path and entrance landscaping in progress



Outdoor seating among established trees and planting

This report was written by Therese, Zoe and Lyon; the final version, with photos, was compiled by Therese.