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**LEI THAR GONE**  
Guest House

## 28 August 2019 / Trimestral Report II / May - August 2019

The last four months have been like a rollercoaster ride – with challenging **ups** and **downs**!

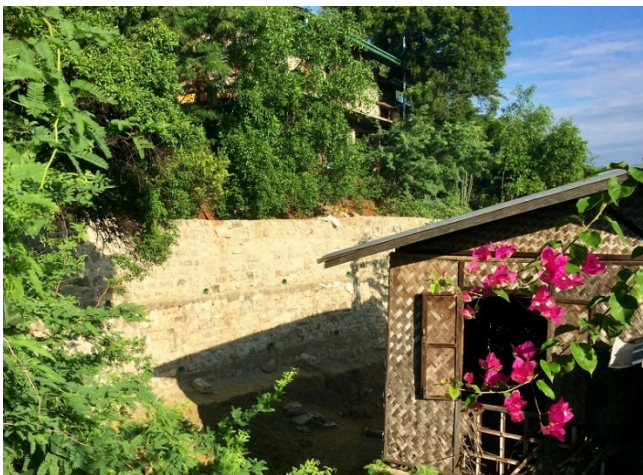
### First – the downs

Myanmar has unfortunately again been in the negative headlines worldwide. Natural disasters and flooding took a heavy toll this year, with nearly 100 people killed and 200'000 displaced. Our Magway Division was also badly affected; even now, the flood relief centre remains open.



*Heavy rains cause flooding at the Guest House*

The steep cliff in front of rooms 7 & 8 is giving way and needs major maintenance... construction of a retaining wall, just like the ones we built at Light of Love and the huge one at the edge of the house with family rooms, has become urgent.



*Construction of massive retaining wall at the edge of the Lei Thar Gone Property / November 2016*

Attacks in Shan state displaced an estimated 2500 people from some 20 villages in Lashio, Nawngcho, Kutkai and Theinni townships. The fighting has cut off a major route for Myanmar-China trade. Dozens of foreigners were left stranded in northern Shan State and over 50 tourists stuck in Hsipaw had to return to Mandalay and Yangon by train, as road transport services were halted due to security concerns.

Meanwhile in Rakhine the military are waging a new war. This time, the target is the Arakan Army, a group that has been fighting for greater autonomy for the region that was an independent kingdom for centuries. Intensified conflict and the government's internet shutdown have dealt serious blows to hopes that the ancient capital of Mrauk-U might achieve World Heritage status and further develop tourism.

These negative headlines are damaging Myanmar's already tarnished image as an attractive tourist destination and arrivals of Western tourists are still dropping amid political and economic concerns, as well as inefficient tourism management. Of course, this depressing situation negatively affects bookings at the Guest House and we have had several months in which sales did not even cover staff salaries.

On a personal level, bad experience is, I keep having bad falls. In mid-June I was in the bathroom when the power went off and I fell in the dark and seriously hurt my back. Was hardly able to walk, but thank God, it could have been worse! Several X-rays were taken and they confirmed that nothing was broken. Meanwhile, I am much better and have been able to attend assemblies at LOL again but I must be very careful in the future!

## And now the Ups...

- The Final Grade 10 Exam Results were announced on June 7<sup>th</sup> – indeed a happy day!  
**Seven out of the eight** Light of Love students that took the exam PASSED!  
That is a success rate of **87.5%**! (the student that failed is now repeating Grade 10)  
This rate is **much higher** than the Magway Division result (32.29%) - the National average was only 31.44%
- Grade 8 – all passed
- The 7<sup>th</sup> school year began on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year we have a total of 187 students enrolled, 67 of these are paying students. This enormous increase of parents willing to pay for their children's education is a clear indication of the positive development of the school and our approach to teaching (in comparison – in 2014 we had a total of 5 paying students)
- We now have a total of 27 teachers. Besides this, 3 students that passed the Grade 10 Final Exam are now volunteering as assistant teachers (Mg Tint Lwin Oo, Ma Noe Zin Hmwe and Ma Khaing Mi Mi San) They are gaining some practical experience before further training
- There are 2 new assistant teachers in pre-school and we also employ 4 cooks, 2 drivers, 1 watchman and 1 cleaner
- May Thazin Aung successfully completed her first of two years training as seamstress at the Mornese Training Centre in Anisakan, Pyin Oo Lwin. We are proud of her success!
- On a national level - Bagan has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a quarter of a century after first being nominated. Many challenges remain, but as a destination that was already popular, Bagan – with the new UNESCO title – is destined to attract further visitors from abroad. Hopefully this will also benefit Lei Thar Gone as we are only a 2-hour drive from Bagan.



*Early morning – hot air balloons over Bagan*

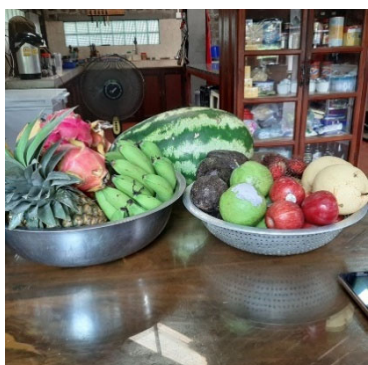
## Some further facts & figures

- We had the pleasure of a short visit by Marc Heintz, president of the Förderverein Kinderhilfe Birma in Germany. The organisation regularly supports Light of Love and their donors sponsor 115 children. Marc and Zoe verified and counterchecked all the sponsorships. Marc greatly improved installations for WiFi coverage at the Guest House so that we now have WiFi in the restaurant, at the pool, on the breakfast terrace and over at LOL – using only one broadband router! Thank you, Marc!
- In May all teachers from the primary school and two from middle school had to attend teacher training that was given by the government. Primary school teachers were trained in Yenangyaung, middle school in Magway
- In June, four middle school teachers had to attend teacher training again, this time however, on five consecutive weekends. The trainings were all related to the new G3 and G6 curriculums – the lessons and content to be used in future
- There are 7 students in Grade 10 this year (including the one repeating) As with the last group, they board at school and Ma San Win cooks for and takes care of them
- The solar system was partially down but is now working completely after an inverter was replaced. We are happy and thankful to have a reliable source of power, also because the price of government electricity has greatly increased!
- Ma Myat Mon Mon Kyaw (Grade 6) was bitten by a dog, the necessary series of vaccinations is completed and she is doing well. Zoe has managed to replenish the stock for future cases
- Mg Nyi Nyi Zaw (Grade 10) constantly had stomach pain. The doctor in Yenangyaung suspected appendicitis and therefore referred him to Magway hospital where an ultrasound check revealed just »normal« upset stomach pain – this shows the worrying lack of competency and skills in local medical care...
- We are happy, that besides a few »normal« health complaints, the children are all doing well
- After a bad fall, one guardian's injury resulted in blindness. At Magway hospital we were relieved to learn that an operation wasn't necessary. Medication was prescribed and thankfully, her eyesight has partially returned.
- Our concern for the children waiting their turn to be taken home after school is the reason for buying a new school bus for US\$20'000. There has been a marked rise in child molestation due to the increase of drug abuse. During the time the cars are out taking the first lot of children home, there are no adults about, leaving the children vulnerable. Recently, a person under influence entered the school yard and badly scared the children. Now we close the gate as soon as all the cars are out.

*The new school bus*



- The immigration officers will not return before next year to issue further NRC cards as there are only a few children eligible – as most still without cards are too young to apply
- I had a very nice birthday on Sunday and received gifts from the children – among many things, a huge watermelon that we all enjoyed



### Meanwhile at the Guest House...

- As already mentioned, the past four months have been very quiet. August saw a few busy days because Europeans are on summer holiday then, but we have had many weeks without any guests. Alternating between empty and full is always challenging, especially for MaThu in the kitchen, but I'm happy to say the staff have learned to handle these situations and do well!
- Ame (MaThus niece) is responsible in the reception. She just spent three months in Yangon where she attended daily English classes and successfully completed the basic Intro level.
- Su Mon is now also working full time at the Guest House, having been assistant teacher at LOL before Ame went to Yangon
- We are happy to report that the »health« of the pool is under control and has been for the past three months. Of this we are proud because with such high temperatures and frequent heavy rain, it is a real challenge to keep the water crystal clear and sparkling blue!
- We are also happy to report that the pending matter of the Guest House license renewal is complete. We now have a license valid until February 2022!
- Recently, there were two articles printed in Myanmar papers and also published online in which the Guest House figured prominently.

The first article is by Bertie Alexander Lawson, Managing director of Sampan Travel, a leading Boutique Tour Operator. It was published in the Myanmar Times in June and is titled » Age of Empires: Journeying through Middle Burma«

<https://www.mmtimes.com/travel/age-empires-journeying-through-middle-burma.html>

The second article is by Melissa Tan, General Manager of Khiri Travel Myanmar. Khiri clients regularly stay at Lei Thar Gone and usually continue on to the CBT (community-based tourism) village of Ma Gyi Kan by way of our adventurous motorbike safari!

Both Melissa and Bertie have stayed at Lei Thar Gone and we are honoured by their positive reports!

<https://www.myanmore.com/2019/06/yenangyaung/>

- Guests are thankfully usually more than happy, as this newest review on booking.com illustrates:

Stewart, (gb)  
 Reservation Number [3191551758](#) Aug 27, 2019 **10**

**New!**

Staff	10	Cleanliness	10
Location	10	Facilities	10
Comfort	10	Value for money	10

**Absolutely Blissful - perfect!**

😊 -Absolutely everything is perfect! -Staff are outstanding -Great rooms - spotless - comfortable - great design. -Spectacular views -Delicious evening meal available - Breakfast is fab!

😞 -There is nothing I would change

[Reply](#)

- Construction of two new suites has been a major focus of my attention and has consumed much of my time! Work is progressing as planned and we plan to have the rooms ready for the new season at the end of October! The rooms are already booked in December, so we have a deadline to meet!



in April....



in May...



in June...



in July...



in August...

This report was compiled and written by Therese, on behalf of Eric & Zoe.