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**LEI THAR GONE**

Guest House

## 30 April 2021 / Trimester Report I / January – April 2021



Dear friends,

In the last report – on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, Eric looked back with thankfulness on what he then thought of as a «very challenging and complicated year». Now nearly four months later, Myanmar is – as you all know – in the middle of an appallingly frightening and vicious crisis. Every day we read about horrific deeds of violence, brutality and outrageous injustice. **But** even more outstanding and noteworthy are the countless acts of unequalled courage, heroism, unselfishness and generosity, mostly by the young people of Myanmar, Generation Z. The perseverance and resilience of the Myanmar people in the face of this coup inspire me and fill me with admiration but also with humility! How quick we are to complain, here in our prosperous and secure environment! We cannot even begin to imagine living in fear for our lives, homes, possessions and loved ones every day! Due to this horrific situation, Myanmar citizens throughout the country are challenged with circumstances and hardships they had all believed belonged to the past!

Communication has become a major challenge. The military has shut down mobile internet and WiFi. Only those with fibre connections can still access the internet. At the moment, telephone lines are still working and since February 1<sup>st</sup> I have called Eric and Zoe, as well as Lyon, regularly. Eric and Zoe are in Pyin Oo Lwin, Lyon and Julian are in Yenangyaung. Fortunately, Eric's cousin Doris, who also lives in Pyin Oo Lwin has a fibre internet connection. The difficulty is the half hour drive from their house to hers because they have been warned not to travel by car, as the military are always on the lookout for private property to confiscate.

The financial situation is another almost insurmountable obstacle. Because of the CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) public life has more or less come to a standstill. Offices, banks and government agencies have been closed or seriously understaffed for months. Usually, the only way to withdraw money is through ATMs, often a frustrating endeavour.

Yenangyaung has military presence, but is otherwise quiet. The military have taken over the University as their headquarters. Shops are open and the market is busy as many people are travelling within Myanmar although this is fraught with risks and many checkpoints.

Sporadically there are buses to and from Yangon, but the ticket price has increased from MMK 10'000 to MMK 26'000. Food prices have also increased dramatically and the threat of famine is real. Due to the current dangerous situation, with many civil servants having lost their jobs, the complete lack of tourism and the economic fallout due to Covid-19, work remains scarce and hunger is omnipresent. So far, for February, March and April Eric and the staff have been able to distribute the rations to the children as before.

There are occasional guests at the Guest House, either Chinese working on the pipelines or locals for an overnight stay, en route from one city to another. The income is very welcome and helps pay for food and other supplies for the family and staff.

The military are also present in Pyin Oo Lwin, although less prominent than during the period around 27<sup>th</sup> March, the annual Armed Forces Day. Day to day life goes on, with many restrictions. Eric's check up at the Clinic of Cardiology at Pun Hlaing Hospital Yangon was due last week. But because of the risks of travelling, Eric decided to have ECG and echocardiogram done at the private hospital in POL. The results were sent to the hospital in Yangon and Eric had an online meeting with his surgeon there on Friday – thankfully he commented very positively on the results of the examinations, so there is no need for an immediate trip to Yangon.

#### Here some information directly from Zoe:

- We managed to put up the new fence around the house of the deaf lady with the six children. Two teenage girls and the younger siblings have to stay at home while the mother goes out for work.
- Kyaw Ye Aung did the work so his family also had support in a way.
- Our HIV students on ART are still receiving regular medicine supply even though the government medical staff are in CDM movement.
- Online classes given by PSYE (teacher training) and La Salle Centre (English courses) have stopped since the end of March, because of the lack of internet... Only cable internet is available in the country. The majority of people use mobile internet and wireless broadband Wi-Fi and do not have access to cable internet.
- there is no news concerning the reopening of Light of Love (or of any other schools for that matter)
- the banking system is terrible, withdrawal systems are different for each bank. For now, ATM is the only way to withdraw from the bank, this is coupled with many tries and much patience.
- Ration distribution goes on well. None of the children are in hardship.
- So far, we heard that they found 4 new Covid cases in Yangon.
- Yenangyaung functions as usual...

#### And a final word straight from Eric:

Dear friends,

I walk a bit now with the support of two people. The battle against the Kachins and Karen still rages on. The Myanmar military suffering heavy losses every day. A lot of soldiers and officers are deserting every day. I think it will be over soon. The Myanmar military is suffering too many casualties to hold on for long. I am concerned they'd assassinate A S K!!! Yenangyaung is very quiet. Not involved in prolonged protests.

On a personal level, I am devastated and very sad to have to tell you that my close friend, trustworthy and loyal right hand at the Guest House, Zaw Min Thun has been diagnosed with liver cancer. He is already very weak and the only hope is a miracle, for which we all pray.

LOL and Blessings

Eric

The news about Zaw Min Thun extremely upset me! I greatly appreciated his kind and always helpful manner! And he was a very enthusiastic and fun student in my English class! My heart goes out to him, his wife and their children. On a greater scale, I very much hope that Eric's optimistic assessment of the situation is true! This week's headlines in The Irrawaddy don't sound so encouraging: "ASEAN's Exclusion of NUG in Summit Disappoints Myanmar" or on a more ominous note: "Myanmar Regime Troops Ordered to 'Annihilate' Protesters, Internal Memos Show - communications from Tatmadaw leaders to field units endorse deadly force against protesters in all areas and paint a picture of an isolated, brainwashed military." Although we all hope for a speedy return to democracy, it's hard to envision at the moment...

Unfortunately, it's currently not possible to make a transfer to benefit Light of Love and the children, but via <https://www.isupportmyanmar.com/> it is possible to support various organisations that help families in need, support the CDM movement or finance the critical ambulance services, to name just a few possibilities. Please consider supporting Myanmar. Take care and kind regards, Therese