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LEI THAR GONE
Guest House

January 20th 2023 / Trimester Report III / September - December 2022

Dear friends,

I can only repeat the first sentence of my last report: *«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.»*

When reading the news from Myanmar, I am reminded daily of how privileged we are here in Europe (for some readers - in the USA/Australia) to be living in countries – where not everything is perfect – but where, for the most part, we experience stability, justice and economic security. This is definitely not the case in Myanmar! Soon it will be two years since the coup – an irreparable amount of damage has been inflicted on the country and its people have suffered – and continue to do so – in all areas of life. Myanmar is struggling with soaring inflation, frequent power outages and commodity shortages, not to mention the widespread, ongoing conflict between pro-democracy groups and the frighteningly brutal junta.

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

<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/qa-sean-turnell-on-being-framed-as-suu-kyis-puppet-master/>

<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/junta-weaponises-digital-banking-transition-to-starve-resistance-funding%ef%bf%bc/>

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/myanmars-generals-the-banality-of-evil.html>

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/crime-surges-under-myanmar-junta-as-rule-of-law-crumbles.html>

Nevertheless, I repeat the observations made in the last report: Life goes on, there are still positive & happy events to report **and it is now more than ever important to hold on to the hope of a better future!**

- Light of Love is open as in the last quarter with all day classes, bus transfers and wholesome lunches for the children.
- The school was closed for Light Festival Holiday for nine days until 17th October. A holiday break everyone enjoyed. Lyon profited from this break and took his son Julian to Yangon, to visit his grandmother.



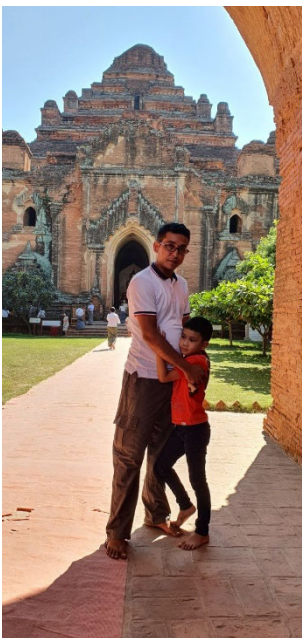
- In October the popular tradition of «Birthday Celebrations on the 25th» was once again initiated. The children with birthdays are allowed to choose the menu. They voted for «Khauk swe kyaw», very popular Chinese style noodles, a favourite of many. «Khauk swe» means noodles and «Kyaw» means to fry in Burmese.
- Besides many other duties, Lyon has been busy working on and organizing the clearing and refurbishment of the land at the Industrial Zone in Yenangyaung. Eric bought this land and originally had the intention of building Light of Love there. His plans changed and the land has been lying more or less uncultivated for years.



Land before work began...



Same plot of land after clean-up. Leaves and grass were burned, the wood chopped to use for cooking at LOL. The aim is to plant vegetables such as onions and tomatoes here, as well as peanuts for oil, as food prices continue to increase dramatically.



In November, the Lei Thar Gone family went on a one-day excursion to Bagan. Apparently, there were quite a few Myanmar tourists, but Lyon saw only a single foreigner....



.... compared to what Bagan used to look like in the pre-Covid / pre-Coup days...



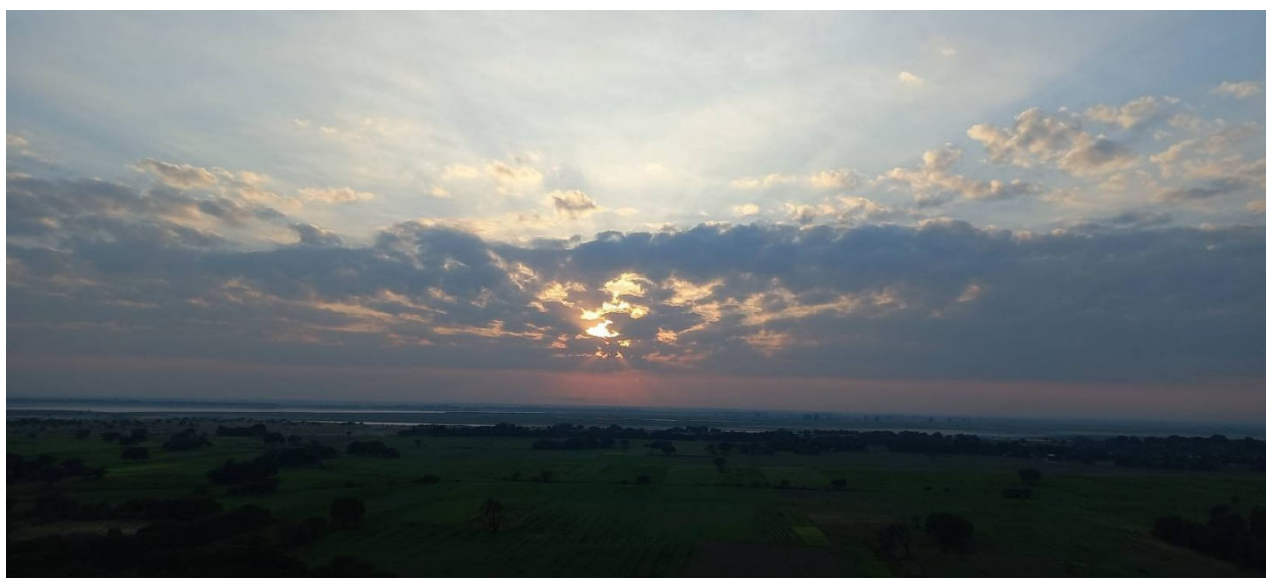
- Food security is as always, a major issue. At the beginning of December, Zoe and Lyon were able to purchase (and thanks to your loyal support also finance) 200 50kg bags of rice. It is stored at the Guest House and equals a 3-month supply. Rations, including rice, oil, onions, lentils and eggs are distributed monthly to all the LOL children and their guardians.
- Zoe travelled from Yangon to Yenangaung on 17th December and organized a small birthday celebration at Light of Love on the 21st. For security reasons, she decided against holding a Christmas Celebration as many Christian institutions have been targeted recently. However, the children all wrote Christmas «Thank you» letters to their French or German sponsors. And thanks to modern technology, Zoe was able to upload them to Google Drive, where on the other side of the world they were downloaded and sent to the sponsors! Warm clothes were distributed (current night-time temperature is approx. 15°C) and a few games were played. All very low-key, so as not to attract any attention from the authorities.



- Also on the 21st the last inspection of LOL by the Ministry of Education took place. Four lady inspectors arrived at 7am and checked all office papers and registrations. They were satisfied and left an hour later without any negative comments! For that we are thankful!

Meanwhile at Lei Thar Gone Guest House

- As with LOL, the situation at the Guest House remains very challenging – mainly due to the absence of guests, otherwise said – the absence of income. However, we are pleased that, thanks to the efforts of Lyon, Lei Thar Gone qualifies as a HSP Certified Business and has been issued the National Health and Safety Protocol Certificate!
- Inflation is an issue – in the past two years, petrol prices for example have increased from 600/700ks per litre to 1955ks per litre. And chlorine, needed to keep the pool clean and blue has increased from 375'000ks to 600'000 for a 50kg bucket. These increases require ingenuity – how to get more out of 50kg of chlorine, for example, without compromising the water quality of the pool.
- Daily power cuts are also a challenge as Myanmar guests require AC in the rooms, regardless of the outdoor temperatures. Running the generator given the current petrol prices is not an option.
- The elevated position of Lei Thar Gone, with its beautiful views, is definitely a USP (unique selling proposition) for the Guest House. Unfortunately, this also has its downsides as with the climate change, which brings heavier and more frequent rain, erosion has become a major problem. The terrain is of unstable rock and although all the houses are built with retaining walls to stabilize the foundations, several of these walls need major maintenance in the upcoming months.
- The solar power system also needs refurbishment and purchase of two new inverters is planned.
- Besides the challenges there were definitely a few HIGHLIGHTS! Having several visitors from Europe in December undeniably qualifies! Exploration Travel, an agent we highly recommend, booked two rooms for two nights for an expat family from the Netherlands. Their two children, aged 6 and 9 greatly enjoyed the pool and it was heart-warming to see our infrastructure in use once again!
- A further highlight was a visit from Patrick Pesenti, founder of the small NGO Solidar'Birmanie that has loyally supported LOL for many years. Patrick came from France exclusively to visit his sponsored children at Light of Love! Thank you, Patrick, for undertaking this risky voyage, for your generosity and your kindness! «Your» children will never forget this unique experience!



December sunset