



yfs

Yangon Film
School

Annual Report 2018

Yangon Film School

Non-profit Association for the Promotion of Young Burmese Film and Video Artists

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2018 at YFS – the Year in Numbers

53 students trained including **22 returning students** and **31 new intakes**

264 days of training and **124 individual training places** provided to young Myanmar

18 different ethnicities in student groups / **53% of students from an ethnic minority**

21% of students from a religion other than the Buddhist majority

53% female and **47% male students trained**

11 international tutors – from countries including India, Germany, USA, UK and Canada

3 graduates from the School's 'Train to Teach' programme working as local tutors

8 short documentaries and 8 short animated documentaries on the topic of 'Youth & Peace in Myanmar'

2 participatory videos made by communities

61 films screened at **33 film festivals** in **21 different countries** including the UK, Germany, South Korea, India, Japan, Turkey, the USA and Myanmar and won **4 awards**

11 Travelling Cinema screenings for **3,500 people** across Myanmar and in neighbouring Thailand

I Foreword from the Director

2018:
Rising to the Challenge

In spite of a challenging funding situation, I am delighted that, in 2018, Yangon Film School succeeded in implementing its planned number of regular courses – including introducing a new intake of 12 students to the Art of Documentary Filmmaking – while maintaining the consistent standards of expertise, knowledge transfer and film production for which the School has gained a strong reputation over the past 13 years.

New co-operations saw the addition of unique courses including Docu-Animation with two substantial trainings in this innovative medium that combined authentic documentary audio-tracks with beautifully animated images to tell hard-hitting stories of the gender-based violence experienced by women in conflict zones (*Stand up for Women! Stand up for Peace!*, p.12) and the no less vital recollections of people living in peaceful coexistence with friends and neighbours from different ethnicities and religions (*Of Peaceful Days*; p.37).

YFS also continued its focus on Participatory Video, training its students to facilitate as communities made videos on issues affecting them, resulting in videos on the environment (*Towards a Clean Future*, p.49) and supporting migrant workers (*Safe Migration*, p.49). Such co-operations add considerable value to YFS's reputation and the skills of its students and cater directly to the needs of communities.

The School's films continued to meet with success at festivals at home and abroad in 2018 and its students implemented Travelling Cinema screenings of YFS films promoting the role of women in the peace process for audiences of over 3,500 in Yangon and marginalised communities in central Myanmar, Shan, Kayah and Chin states and in Mae Sot in Thailand (see p.63).

With around 50% of students coming from ethnicities other than the Bamar majority, the School once again exceeded its diversity targets and, with over half its trainees being female, maintained its excellent gender balance. On-the-job management training continued to promote the transfer of ownership to the local partner, with the Train-to-Teach programme seeing the qualification of two new local tutors in Sound Design.

Overall in 2018, Yangon Film School pushed forward with its valuable work and remained loyal to its brief to strengthen civil society and enhance intercultural dialogue between conflicting national ethnicities by training a young, skilled multi-ethnic media workforce that enables marginalised voices to be heard and is helping to create a diverse and inclusive media culture in Myanmar.



Lindsey Merrison
YFS Founder & Director, March 2019



PEOPLE



MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Yangon Film School has traditionally had offices in Berlin and at the School premises in Yankin Township, Yangon. At the end of 2018, the School closed its Berlin office. This was partly a cost-cutting exercise but chiefly due to YFS increasingly moving its administrative work to Yangon in preparation for the long-term goal of handing the School over to local partners.

Berlin office



Lindsey Merrison
Director



Tina Walinda
Project & Fund Manager/
Communications & PR



Johanna Huth
Festival Coordinator



Arlette Heyn
Accountant

Yangon office



Aleksandra Minkiewicz
Country Director



Aye Ahr Marn
Project Officer



Naw Hse Htoo Paw
Logistics
(until July)



Salai Samuel
Equipment Manager



Naw Sar Eh Paw
Accountant

Yangon Film Services



Ta Ra
Production Coordinator



Aye Ni Mar
Accountant

The YFS Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the School's governing body. It undertakes constant and consistent oversight and is the main decision-making authority. It is elected by the student body represented by the Student Sub-Committee and YFS-founder and Director Lindsey Merrison who serves as Chairperson and has power of veto.

The YFS Yangon Steering Committee develops the INGO's strategy and coordinates with the Director who ensures its implementation. The Committee also ensures that all provisions of law and the INGO internal policies are abided by and works to achieve their compliance.



Lindsey Merrison
Chairperson & Founding
Director of YFS



Daw Yu Lay War War
(Grace Swe Zin Htaik)
Independent Film
Industry Representative



Franz Xaver Augustin
International Arts &
Culture Representative



Cho Cho Hnin
(Shin Daewe)
Student /Alumni
Representative



Shunn Lei Swe Yee
Student /Alumni
Representative



Wai Mar Nyunt
Student /Alumni
Representative



Aleksandra Minkiewicz
Local Management
Representative

The YFS Student Sub-Committee

The YFS Steering Committee is supported by a five-member Student Sub-Committee which is elected on an annual basis by the entire student body and the YFS Director. In 2018 the **Student Sub-Committee** members were:



Sai Nyi Nyi
(joined YFS in 2011)



Thet Su Hlaing
(joined YFS in 2011)



May Htoo Cho
(joined YFS in 2007)



Nwaye Zar Che Soe
(joined YFS in 2014)



Sai Naw Kham
(joined YFS in 2014)

YANGON FILM FOUNDATION

In May 2017, the Yangon Film Foundation (YFF) was founded as a local NGO with an all-Myanmar board. Initially operating alongside YFS in order to build capacity, YFF will eventually steer and have oversight over all the School's activities. Its formation represents another key step towards realising the School's long-term goal of handing over operations to a Myanmar administration. The **Yangon Film Foundation** board members are:



Kyi Pyu Shin
Film Director



Diramore
(Maung Maung Zaw Htet)
Musician & Film
Composer



Khin Myanmar
YFS editor / trainer



Thet Su Hlaing
YFS student since 2011



Soe Arkar Htun
YFS student since 2014

Student Case Study – Htwe Htwe

Htwe Htwe (also known as Doris) is 31. She was born in the small town of Demoso in Kayah state in Eastern Myanmar and grew up in the state capital of Loikaw. Her parents are both farmers. Before joining YFS in 2018, Htwe Htwe worked at the Kayan Women's Organization and as a case manager at the Women's Safe House in Loikaw. Her work with women who have experienced gender-based violence stood her in good stead for the School's Stand up for Women! Stand up for Peace! docu-animation course (see pp.12).



What made you apply to YFS?

I like to work in documentary. I stand up for human rights and telling the truth. In Myanmar, people can't speak out openly or criticize what's really going on. I believe there should be a way to highlight this oppression and violations by using the arts and media – they can be the most effective way to spread a message. I heard that YFS trains young documentary filmmakers and I was personally interested in making documentaries, so I applied to join.

Which film(s) have you been involved in at YFS?

In the Stand Up for Women! Stand Up for Peace! project I helped create an animation film about a girl who was raped. It's called *Kayah Lily* and revealed a terrible injustice to women. I'm very proud of the film. It's about a sensitive issue and it highlights the importance of the rule of law.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to make documentaries that will help to support the political transition. I also intend to continue working for women in politics and for the equality of all citizens. And I would like to learn more about documentary filming and become a filmmaker myself.

How do you feel about the future of Myanmar?

As more foreign investment is coming into the country, there are development projects in some regions but there is also continued oppression. Some of the investment, and the actions of the government, is leading to land-grabbing and the seizure of farms, and people are being bullied. Looking ahead to the 2020 election campaign, the USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party, founded by ex-general Thein Sein in 2010) is trying very hard to regain power and there is some malpractice. I'm worried about the future because no one is guaranteeing citizen's rights. There is a rivalry between dictatorships aiming to win over the people.

Yangon Film School draws upon a pool of international and Myanmar filmmakers to tutor its courses. In 2018 the School's tutors were (in alphabetical order):



Aung Min / Film Analysis

Myanmar writer, filmmaker and medical doctor, wrote the script for *The Monk* (dir. The Maw Naing) which premiered at Karlovy Vary in 2014



Bamdad Erfanian / Post-Production

Australian editor and post-production supervisor who has worked at ABC Television, Flying Bark Productions and Northern Pictures Limited



Debjani Mukherjee / Docu-Animation

Indian animation filmmaker and teacher completing a PhD on 'Indigenous Art in Transition' and working with aboriginal artists in India



Frances Calvert / Film History

UK-Australian documentary filmmaker of the award-winning *Cracks in the Mask* (1997) and *Talking Broken* (1990)



Kirsten Kunhardt / Sound Design

German sound designer of over 60 films and TV programmes including the top-rated German crime series *Tatort*



Dr Khin Mar Mar Kyi / Long-Form Documentary Filmmaking

Award-winning Burmese academic (University of Oxford, UK) and director of films including *Dreams of Dutiful Daughters* (2013)



Kyaw Ko Ko / Sound Recording and Sound Design

YFS-trained filmmaker, one of the first graduates of the Train-to-Teach programme who has now joined the School's roster of tutors



Lindsey Merrison / Long-Form Documentary Filmmaking

Anglo-Burmese founder of YFS and maker of feature-length documentaries *Our Burmese Days* (1996) and *Friends in High Places* (2001)

Melissa Hacker / Documentary Editing

American editor, editing professor and director of feature documentary *My Knees Were Jumping: Remembering the Kindertransports* (1996)

Mila Aung Thwin / Documentary Filmmaking

Canadian-Burmese documentary filmmaker, producer and activist whose films have screened on CTV in Canada, the BBC and TV2 in Denmark

Paromita Vohra / Docu-Animation

Indian writer, filmmaker and activist, writer of the feature film *Silent Waters* (2003) which won five awards at the Locarno Film Festival .

Rachel Mathews / Screenwriting & Docu-Animation

UK writer and director of award-winning shorts, storyliner and script editor on season 2 of *The Sun, The Moon & The Truth* Myanmar TV series

Sabine Hellmann / Participatory Video

German-born, UK-based documentary filmmaker and participatory video facilitator who has worked in Malawi, Uganda, Ukraine and the UK

Slyne Mon / Sound Design

Musician and YFS-trained filmmaker, a graduate of the Train-to-Teach programme who has now joined the School's roster of tutors

Tuula Mehtonen / Editing

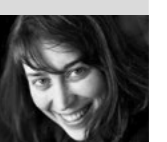
Renowned Finnish editor of award-winning documentaries including *Father to Son* (2004) and *Daughters of Palna* (2007)

Tuuli Alanära / Editing

Finnish editor of award-winning fiction and non-fiction including *Live East, Die Young* (2012) and *Treffit (The Date, 2013)*.

Tin Win Naing / Cinematography

YFS-trained DOP who has shot projects including multi-award-winning feature documentary *Nargis: When Time Stopped Breathing* (2008).



IN MEMORIAM: FRANCES CALVERT

In September 2018 Yangon Film School was deeply saddened to receive the news of the unexpected passing in Sydney, Australia of Frances Calvert, long-standing tutor of the School's Ways of Seeing: A History of Film Form course and a dear personal friend to many YFS members and tutors.

In her own documentaries, Frances chose to shine a light on the colonial past and ambivalent present of the Torres Strait Islanders in Australia's far north, but she had an encyclopaedic knowledge of many different film genres and forms from all around the world. **Her passion for the art of film knew no bounds.**

As anyone who attended her classes at YFS or at the Goethe Institut in Yangon knows, **Frances was not only an exceptionally knowledgeable teacher but someone who exuded genuine warmth and a natural ability to inform her teaching with a unique sense of humour and love of life.**

Farewell, dear Frances, we miss you greatly.



THANK YOU, MR AUGUSTIN!

Yangon Film School would like to say **goodbye and thank you** to the Goethe Institut Myanmar's Mr Franz Xaver Augustin who retired in February 2019.

Mr Augustin has been a loyal partner of Yangon Film School for more than a decade. During that time, he has collaborated closely with YFS, helping to provide countless students with opportunities to deepen their filmmaking skills on YFS courses, or broaden their horizons at film festivals, internships and film schools abroad.

From the production of Myanmar's first award-winning feature-length documentary *Nargis – when time stopped breathing* to the restoration of Maung Wunna's charming 1972 work *Che Phawa Daw Nu Nu (Tender are the Feet)* and the creation of the YFS-Goethe Institut Documentary Awards, Mr Augustin's involvement has helped breathe life into dozens of memorable films and launch a number of filmmaking careers. His contribution bears testimony to his belief in the art of film, in all its incarnations.

The Yangon Film School would not be where it is today without him – **we wish you well in your retirement, Mr Augustin, and thank you very much!**

'It has always been a joy and an honour for the Goethe-Institut to help design and grow the only school in Myanmar where young Burmese can systematically learn the craft of filmmaking.'

Franz Xaver Augustin

YFS Alumni Destinations /

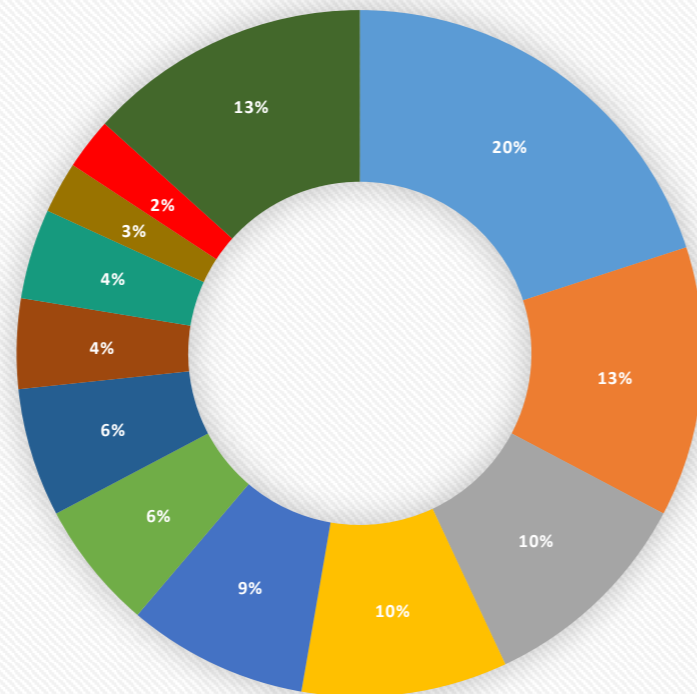
In early 2019, YFS undertook a survey of 165 alumni to discover how they were employed in 2018.

The survey reveals the high impact of the School's trainings, with almost 80% percent of its alumni working in the media.

The equivalent figure for UK media graduates is estimated to be around 30% (<https://stephenfollows.com/how-many-film-students-are-there-in-the-uk/>)

- Freelance Filmmaker / Director: 33
- Sound Recordist / Post-Production: 21
- Screenwriter / Journalist: 17
- Camera: 16
- Editor: 14
- Producer / Production Company: 10
- Media NGO / CSO: 10
- Media Training: 7
- Non-Film Related: 7
- Artist: 4
- Studying / Living Abroad: 4
- No Contact: 22

Yangon Film School
Alumni Destinations 2018



TRAININGS



The Art of Docu-Animation#2:

Stand up for Women! Stand up for Peace!

/ 18 December 2017 - 17 February 2018 (54 Training Days) at the YFS school building, Yangon

Tutors: Paromita Vohra (India);
Debjani Mukherjee (India)
YFS-trained Tutor's Assistant Aye Nilar Kyaw
(Myanmar)

Participants: 8 women and 4 men aged between 22 and 35
from diverse backgrounds (filmmakers, artists, activists, journalists) and religions (Buddhist and Christian) and a range of Myanmar ethnicities, including Kayah, Kayin, Shan, Kachin, Myanmar and Sino-Myanmar.

Objectives: to create four short animated documentaries telling the stories of women experiencing gender-based violence in conflict zones.

Description: The nine-week course began with a three-week audio workshop to guide the students in identifying protagonists, recording testimonials and editing soundtracks. Led by Indian activist and filmmaker Paromita Vohra, the students learned key lessons about personal safety and 'do no harm' before going out into the field. They travelled long distances from Yangon to conflict zones in Kayah, Kachin, Shan and Kayin states to research and record the personal stories of women living there. Each group recorded two stories before returning to Yangon to edit their extensive field recordings into clear, succinct and effective three-minute audio tracks.

During the audio part of the course, the students discussed the theory and gained hands-on practical experience of topics including:

- the different ways gender manifests itself in life and social roles, and how this can lead to gender-based violence
- the importance of a local gaze that brings compassion and nuance to a story for home audiences without imposing an ideological schema
- life in a conflict zone: since many students came from conflict regions, they shared their personal experiences and perspectives
- different approaches to structuring a narrative and layering a personal story with an understanding of gender and the effects of violence
- how to express emotion, drama and context with sound design
- how to research and record with the minimum of harm and be sensitive to the contributors.

Once the soundtracks were complete, a six-week animation course led by Indian animator and educator Debjani Mukherjee gave the students an intensive training in animation techniques including stop motion, cut-out, digital and sand animation, storyboarding, sound and music for animation and the animatic process. The tutor then guided the four groups as they created their short animated films.

This part of the course was carefully structured between classroom activities, team interactions, discussions and self and team assessments. Screenings introduced a wide range of inspiring and diverse docu-animations. Each day began with a life drawing class followed by 'acting for animators'. Experimentation and freedom of expression were strongly encouraged throughout. The groups regularly showed their work in progress and received feedback.



The Art of Docu-Animation#2 / cont.

They went to record on location tentative and nervous. When they returned they were **full of motivation and limber energy**. They felt responsible to the people whose stories they had gathered to make the best film possible.

Paromita Vohra, Audio Documentary Tutor



Topics covered during the animation part of the course included:

- gender-based violence and how story, images and audio can bring the urgency of these issues to a wide audience
- how docu-animation can be a tool to engage an audience in topics that may be difficult to film and/or watch
- how animation can not only depict emotional truth but can also motivate and engage audiences to come forward with active support
- the importance of sound and music in docu-animation
- using poetics and metaphor and avoiding being literal, especially when the voice of the subject is already doing that work
- the range of outlets for moving image work – from television to screenings, festivals, galleries and the internet.

Outcomes: the course resulted in the creation of four short docu-animation films on the topic of women living in conflict zones and gender-based violence. Descriptions of the individual films can be found on [p.50](#). In addition, the course:

1. Trained 12 students in how to make short docu-animations. The students can now work independently to create their own animations.
2. Increased the students' awareness of gender-based violence and gave them tools to transmit this awareness to a general audience.
3. Trained the students to create the associated materials for film production, including posters, trailers and teasers.
4. Made the students – 95% of who didn't know anything about animation beyond children's cartoons before the course began – aware of the power of animation as a tool for documentary and for social change.



The Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners /

14 February – 7 April 2018, at the YFS school building, Yangon

Tutors: Mila Aung Thwin (lead tutor, Canada);
 Tuula Mehtonen and Tuuli Alanärä (editing tutors from Finland);
 Tin Win Naing (camera tutor, Myanmar);
 Kyaw Ko Ko (sound tutor, Myanmar)

Basic Training Tutors (as part of the YFS Train-to-Teach programme):
 Slyne Mon (sound);
 Nay Lynn Aung (camera)

Directing Mentors: Hnin Ei Hlaing,
 Aye Nilar Kyaw,
 Nwaye Zar Che Soe and Tin Win Naing

YFS Editors: May Htoo Cho, Thida Swe,
 Khin Warso and Mi Mi Lwin

Participants: six women and six men aged between 21 and 35
of mixed ethnicities and religions including Kayin Christian, Shan-Indian Buddhist, Dawei Buddhist, Kachin Christian, Rakhine Buddhist and Bamar Buddhist, with two students self-identifying as LGBTI.

Objectives: to provide an overall appreciation, understanding and training in documentary filmmaking, teaching beginner students the artistic, theoretical and technical aspects of sound, camera, research, writing and directing, with an emphasis on working in a team.

Description: the course began with a three-day basic training in how to operate the camera, sound and lighting equipment. The training was provided by YFS students in the Train-to-Teach programme. Their thorough training enabled the beginner students to quickly pick up the gear, split into teams, shoot their first training assignments and then view their footage as a group, receiving feedback from the tutors and peers.

The international tutor then provided a theoretical and practical introduction to researching a documentary idea, working in a team, choosing a subject and working on location. Screenings and discussions of a wide range of international documentaries – as well as films made by the YFS trainers and mentors – gave the students an idea of the scope of documentary filmmaking and its different genres, styles and approaches.

Topics covered included:

- short and long format documentary structure
- why make documentaries?
- the importance of story – structure, tension and resolution
- documentary ethics and the responsibilities of documentary filmmakers, including ensuring the safety of film subjects
- how to represent yourself and your work verbally (pitching) and in written form
- a basic overview of the power of editing
- information versus observation, and empathy in documentary film
- international production grant opportunities
- screening your film at festivals and the importance of the documentary community.

The Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners / cont.

The students then began work on their final project – a short film of 10-15 minutes in length – by writing a two-page document on their idea and then pitching it to the group. Each project was analysed by the tutors and student mentors for its artistic and ethical aims, merit and feasibility, and the four final films were chosen. The students formed four three-person crews of director, camera and sound and travelled – often quite long distances from Yangon, to Mandalay, Taunggyi and Kayah State – to spend six days shooting their films.

The films were edited by four YFS-trained editors under tutelage from Finnish editing mentors Tuula Mehtonen and Tuuli Alanärä. The beginner students were fully integrated into the post-production process, learning key elements of editing and subtitling by observing their peers.

Outcomes: The students filmed four exercise assignments and four final films on the topic of 'Youth & Peace in Myanmar'. Descriptions of the individual films can be found on [p.46](#). In addition, the course gave the students:

1. An understanding of and practical experience in the basics of sound, image and directing documentary.
2. The ability to work effectively as a team.
3. The basics of documentary editing/storytelling.
4. The ability to understand and critique documentary aesthetics in the work of others (peers and international examples).

*After seeing **Lost Boy**, I was bursting with pride and I realised I'd made the right decision to join the School. I was so happy to see my name in the credits: it gave me the confidence and motivation to create more films.*

Shin Thandar, 27, female student, 2018 intake



Introduction to Participatory Video /

21 – 31 May 2018 at the YFS school building, Yangon

YFS Tutor: Sabine Hellmann (Germany)

Participants: four women and four men
of different ethnicities and religions including Kayin Christian, Dawei Buddhist and Bamar Buddhist.

Objectives: to train students from the 2018 intake in participatory video (PV) facilitation so they can facilitate PV processes with communities across Myanmar and support these communities in exploring key issues affecting them.

Description: the 10-day training course was divided into four parts:

Part 1 – Exercises for technical skills development and video production: during the first four days, the students were given first-hand experience of various methods of group-based learning and video-making.

Part 2 – Field-based practice: the students went out to practice PV techniques: one group worked with the staff of recycling/upcycling initiative ChuChu in Dala Township; the other with staff from NET organisation on human trafficking and safe migration issues in Yangon. The students facilitated a two-day PV process as their groups made a short video on a topic of their choosing (see film descriptions on p.49).

Part 3 – Reflection, participatory editing and screenings: the students reflected upon what they had learned during their field work. They then edited the footage shot by their participants and learned how to successfully plan, prep and facilitate PV screening events. Once again, they practised the theory by facilitating a PV screening with the participants of ChuChu.

Part 4 – Participatory video project design and management: on the final day, the students focused on video topic selection, timetabling and how to adapt the PV process to diverse aims (knowledge/skills sharing; community mobilisation; advocacy/ reaching decision and policy-makers). They also shared ideas for future PV projects, including the YFS Travelling Cinema project.





The Art of Documentary Editing: An Introduction /

2 – 30 June 2018 at the YFS school building, Yangon

YFS Tutors: Melissa Hacker (USA) plus two YFS-trained editing trainers Sai Nyi Nyi and Mi Mi Lwin.

Participants: the six women and six men from the 2018 intake plus the YFS Equipment Manager *from a variety of ethnicities and religions.*

Objectives: to introduce the 2018 intake of students to digital editing, giving them a basic understanding and hands-on experience of its technical, organisational and aesthetic aspects in compliance with international standards.

Description: the course mixed theoretical and technical lectures with practical editing exercises. A special emphasis was placed throughout on finding inspiration and creativity within film footage. The course opened with a fundamental discussion of concepts and terms including:

- what is documentary film? Why make a documentary?
- the role of editing in a documentary: what does the editor actually do?
- documentary ethics and how to be sensitive to people who have generously welcomed documentary cameras into their lives
- addressing complicated and shifting realities
- paying attention to the rushes and finding the 'best bits': the ineffable, emotional moments and shots with a special quality
- how to start creating sequences, scenes, acts and narrative arcs
- the necessity of experimentation and being patient with the footage
- creating, finding and using visual metaphors
- using sound design and music to support and heighten the emotion, drama and context of a film
- the importance of teamwork and of creating a supportive group of collaborators.

The students then learned the components of the digital editing suite, the basics of the School's Premiere Pro CC editing software and the steps and schedules of the editing workflow.

Theoretical discussions and practical exercises were interspersed throughout the course with film screenings and post-screening discussions, often with the filmmakers themselves present.

Students were set three editing exercises using footage shot in the *All in a Day's Work* exercises from the 2014 and 2018 beginners' courses:

1. **Charcoal Manufacturer** – working in teams, students edited seven 5-minute observational films
2. **Guitar-Making Workshop** – working in teams or alone, students created nine 10-minute films combining observation with interviews
3. **Life in a Beauty Salon; a Car Workshop; a Traditional Toy-Making Workshop; A Burmese Harp Maker** – students worked individually to create thirteen 5-10 minute films on one of the four topics, using a combination of observation, to-camera interview and voiceover

One-to-one screenings and discussions of assemblies and rough cuts took place in the editing rooms with the international tutor; one-to-one technical tutoring was provided by the YFS-trained Editing Trainers. Rushes, rough cuts and fine cuts of the editing exercises were screened in the classroom and discussed among the entire group of students and tutors.

Outcomes: alongside completing the three exercise assignments, students ended the training with a solid grounding in:

- approaching observational material, working with filmed conversation and using voice-over
- finding and developing narrative structure in a documentary
- communicating with the director and project planning
- preparing rushes for screening and how to approach the screening process
- screening material and reacting to feedback
- creating titles and subtitles
- exporting Quicktime movies.

The students were also given an introduction to sound editing and mixing via a guest lecture from YFS-trained sound tutor Kyaw Ko Ko.

Student Case Study: Moe Kyaw Thu

Moe Kyaw Thu (28) was born and grew up in Mandalay. His mum and dad both worked in traditional Burmese theatre, as a dancer and musician respectively. Before joining YFS in 2018, Moe Kyaw Thu worked as a studio photographer and touch-up artist in Mandalay. He was also a volunteer, filming natural disasters for Bhamaso Humanitarian Aid Organization as well as working in their IT department.

Why did you apply to join YFS?

I was really interested in filmmaking but there was no way I could afford this kind of training. I could only learn by watching YouTube videos. Then I saw *Sugar and Spice* (award-winning YFS documentary by Mi Mi Lwin) at Wathann Film Festival and I heard about the YFS Travelling Cinema project. I learned more from the YFS facebook pages and I decided I really wanted to join.

Which films have you worked on at YFS so far?

I worked on the camera and sound for *Lost Boy* and the sound design for *Burmese Rapper* (2018 Beginner films, [see p.46](#)). I was also in the *Beyond the Hatred* team for the Docu-Animation course ([see p.50](#)) and worked on the audio interview and editing the animation. And I was a participatory video facilitator for the *Safe Migration PV* ([see p.49](#)).

Which film/project are you most proud of being involved in at YFS and why?

I'm happy with all the films I've worked on. During the docu-animation, I had to sketch the scenes and scenarios as I imagined them and structure the questions to prepare for the interview. Seeing the finished film now, I'm really satisfied with it. During the beginners' course, when I was asked what style of filming I was planning as DOP on *Lost Boy*, I had no answer. I felt a large burden of responsibility but I managed to figure it out while shooting and I'm very proud of the film because it marks the beginning of my filmmaking career.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to become a better director with stronger filmmaking skills. I'd like to make a documentary about the Burmese theatre and maybe also a short fiction film while my parents are still alive. And I really want to set up a film screening club in Mandalay to pass on my knowledge about film history to other people in my home city.

What about the future of Myanmar – are you feeling positive or negative?

If the law and regulations for the Myanmar film industry are amended and the censorship board allows more releases, then my dream of establishing a film screening club will become a possibility. I also hope that it will become easier to shoot documentaries so we can connect more with ordinary people and tell their stories.



Student Case Study: Shin Thandar

Shin Thandar (27) was born in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State on the western coast of Myanmar. Her father runs a small, family-owned poultry farm outside the city. Shin Thandar lived in Sittwe until she was 17 and then moved to Yangon. She worked in communications and gained over five years experience in social media, journalism and translating for international trade and development, working for companies including the World Bank and MNTV television channel. She joined the YFS beginners' course in February 2018.

Why did you apply to join YFS?

I've been fascinated with movies ever since I was young. I used to dream about learning filmmaking but I didn't know how to start or where I could learn. I also want to be able to empower communities and voices which are often overlooked in Myanmar and help bring about inclusive growth and development. So when I heard about YFS, I applied to join.

Which films have you been involved in during your first year at YFS?

I was director and additional cameraperson on *Lost Boy*, one of the four beginners' documentaries ([see p.46](#) for film description). I was an animator on the *Our Town* docu-animation ([see p.50](#)) and I've also been a participatory video facilitator.

Which film/project are you most proud of being involved in at YFS and why?

To be honest, I'm proud of them all! After seeing *Lost Boy*, I was bursting with pride and I realised I'd made the right decision to join the School. I was so happy to see my name in the credits: it gave me the confidence and motivation to create more films. Then, being an animator on the *Our Town* docu-animation was a lot of hard work but it taught me the importance of working well in a team, and that creating good work requires time. Becoming a participatory video facilitator in the Travelling Cinema project, I've had the chance to be a part of making a positive change for young people in Kyauk Gyi in Bago Region.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to learn more about filmmaking so I can create beautiful films that express my feelings and ideas. I'd love my films to go to international festivals. And it would be great if I could be a part of a community making positive changes via film.

What about the future of Myanmar – are you feeling positive or negative?

I hope that Myanmar is changing for the better. Even though it will be hard to get peace and a good economy for everyone, I'm feeling positive about the future of the country. We need to move forward together.



How Films Work: Film Analysis /

3 – 21 July 2018 at the YFS school building, Yangon

YFS Tutor: Aung Min (Myanmar)

Participants: the six women and six men from the new 2018 intake
from a variety of ethnicities and religions.

Objectives: this course is designed to help students become more aware of the viewing experience when watching a film. It gives them insight into classical film dramaturgy and provides a window on contrasting film cultures and different kinds of filmic expression around the world.

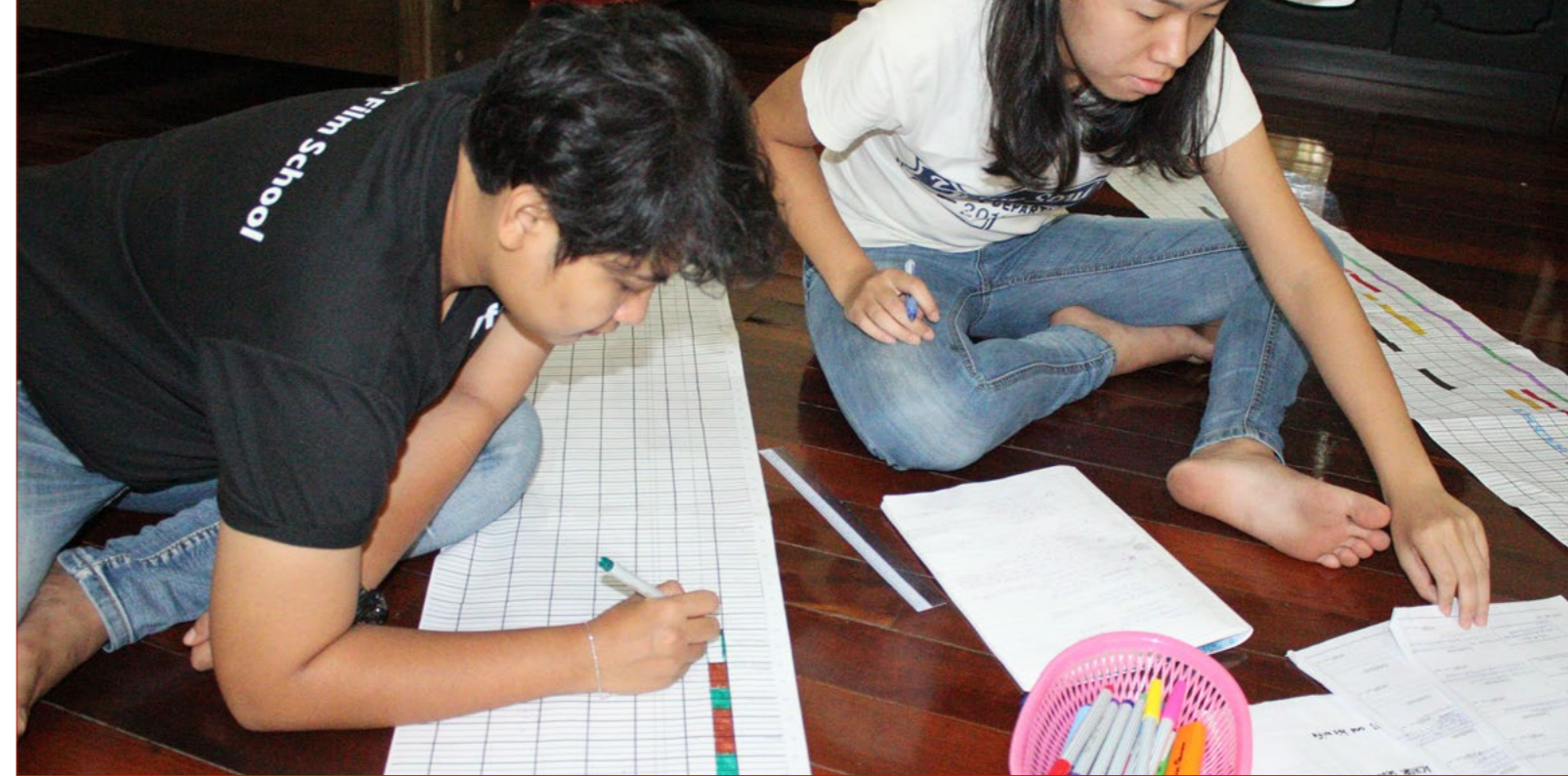
Description: the course opened with general lectures on the emotions, characters in film, and how filmmakers create opportunities for the audience to identify with their protagonists. Still photographs helped the students to connect emotions with images and to understand simple structural forms. Yasujiro Ozu's film *An Autumn Afternoon* was used as an example for all the lectures, with tutor Dr Aung Min – an alumnus of the YFS Train-to-Teach programme – deconstructing the film's structure and cinematic elements on a timeline for the class.

The students then split into groups and each group was set the task of analysing one of the following six films, all of which were specifically chosen for their contrasting nationalities, dramaturgies and filmmaking techniques:

- *3-Iron* by Kim Ki-Duk (Korea, 2004)
- *In the Mood for Love* by Wong Kar-wai (Hong Kong, 2000)
- *Taste of Cherry* by Abbas Kiarostami (Iran, 1997)
- *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* by Cristian Mungiu (Romania, 2007)
- *Rosetta* by Luc Dardenne and Jean-Pierre Dardenne (France/Belgium, 1999)
- *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* by Tsai Ming-Liang (Malaysia/Taiwan, 2006)

After completing a detailed analysis of their specific film over several days, the groups presented their findings to the rest of the class.

Outcomes: each student ended the course with a detailed analysis on a timeline of their group's film plus a solid grounding in classical film dramaturgy and how different filmmakers around the world structure a film story.





Other Ways of Seeing: A History of Film Form /

6 – 23 August 2018 at the YFS school building, Yangon

YFS Tutor: Frances Calvert (Australia)

Participants: the six women and six men from the 2018 intake from a variety of ethnicities and religions) plus a female teacher on the film course at the National University of Arts and Culture who wanted to enhance her knowledge to pass on to her own students.

Objectives: to improve the new intake's knowledge of the past and present of cinema and of films from different cultures and artistic styles with the aim of showing the students how a diverse and broad range of artists express themselves in film language.

Description: this intensive three-week course replicates a first-year university module on film history. The students received a comprehensive handout and dossier of film stills to facilitate their examination of aspects of film language such as composition, camera angles and the rule of three. Entire films and numerous clips were screened to illustrate this written text. The daily programme moved from theory to practical examples. In Week 3, students undertook a deep analysis of *Citizen Kane*. Topics covered included:

- the history and development of cinematography, mise-en-scène, camera movement, editing and sound
- early silent film, the transition to sound film, Hollywood in the Golden Age, American Independent Cinema
- the history of the documentary, including interwar and post-war British documentaries such as *Man of Aran* and *Night Mail*
- animation and sound, including Disney's first sound animation and the films of Jacques Tati
- German Expressionism; German New Objectivity and 'street' films
- Italian Neo-realism, American Direct Cinema, American documentary (e.g. Flaherty)
- Soviet montage, with a special focus on Eisenstein
- American and European avant-garde film including Maya Deren, Herz Frank, Isaac Julien, Bert Haanstra
- new cinema from developing countries

Outcomes: each student took a final test to check their comprehension of the concepts and terms introduced in the course, which they all satisfactorily passed. The students also wrote a short paper on a scene of their choice from *Citizen Kane*.

I really want to **set up a film screening club in Mandalay to pass on my knowledge about film history** to other people in my home city. (...) I also hope that it will become easier to shoot documentaries so we **can connect more with ordinary people and tell their stories.**

Moe Kyaw Thu, 28, male student, 2018 intake

The Art of Post-Production /

10 September – 6 October 2018 at the YFS school building, Yangon

I think what YFS does in Myanmar is a great thing ... how passionate the students are is amazing.

Bamdad Erfanian, Tutor, The Art of Post-Production

YFS Tutor: Bamdad Erfanian (Australia)

Participants: the six women and six men from the new 2018 intake
from a variety of ethnicities and religions plus one female and one male student who had missed the course in previous years.

Objectives: the course was designed to provide the new intake of students with a basic knowledge of the different areas of post-production in film, ranging from technical knowledge to conceptual inspiration as a tool for creativity and self-expression.

Description: the course was divided into four weeks:

Week 1 focused on providing a basic knowledge of the technical aspects of post-production. This was delivered via presentations on specific topics, always followed by extensive question and answer sessions.

During Weeks 2 and 3 the students undertook practical exercises on the topics discussed in Week 1. The practice was designed so the students were taken step-by-step through simple tasks in order to achieve a concrete post-production goal.

In **Week 4** the students formed four groups and went through the entire process of conceiving and producing a mini-film. This included discussing ideas, scripting, shot-listing, filming and then undertaking the full post-production of the film.

Outcomes: the course resulted in the short exercises undertaken on each post-production topic (including colour grading, adding titles and credits, subtitling) and the four mini-films produced in Week 4. Students also ended the course with a sound grounding in the concepts and practical aspects of post-production and are now ready to put their learning into practice on YFS projects and their own films.



The Art of Sound Design /

8 October – 3 November at the YFS school building, Yangon



YFS Tutors: Kirsten Kunhardt (Germany) with support from YFS-trained sound tutors Kyaw Ko Ko and Slyne Mon as part of the YFS 'Train-to-Teach' programme

Participants: **three women and seven men**
from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities, including Kachin Christian, Rakhine Buddhist, Chin-Zomi Christian and Bamar Buddhist.

Objectives: to give the students the ability to undertake the sound editing of a film, including making an assessment of the original sound quality and learning the methods and technical possibilities required to improve it acoustically. The course also explored the artistic and creative levels of sound design and gave students the opportunity to learn the theory and practical techniques of using atmospheres, sounds and effects to enhance a film's soundtrack.

Outcomes: four documentaries (of 15-20 min in length) and three exercises (of 5-7 min) were set to music and mixed by the students. In addition, each student chose one of the short animations from the YFS Docu-Animation#2 course (see pp. 12) and worked independently to set this film to music. Finally, the entire class worked on setting a trailer to music and mixing it together in 5.1 surround sound.

Description: the course began by presenting and discussing the theory of sound work on various levels. The students were then given the chance to apply this knowledge in a series of practical exercises on films previously made by YFS. Topics covered and practised by the students included:

All students were required to sit a final written paper in the theory and practice of sound design at the end of the course; all passed with good or excellent results.

- which Plug-Ins are used to solve which acoustic problems
- how a scene can be created and enhanced via the use of sound
- the creation and use of Foleys
- the use of music in a film and where and when it is required.



A Farewell to Arms: Long-Form Documentary Development /

3 – 4 December 2018 at the YFS school building, Yangon

YFS Tutors: Lindsey Merrison (UK),
Dr Khin Mar Mar Kyi (Oxford University, UK).

Participants: fourteen women and six men
from various backgrounds and ethnicities including Shan, Pa-O, Kayin, Kayan and Bamar Buddhist and Kachin, Kayan and Kayin Christian, with 14 YFS students and alumni and six research scholars from across Myanmar.

Objectives: this two-day workshop brought together a group of the School's filmmakers with researchers in the field of conflict and peace studies with the aim of inspiring the filmmakers to develop a number of long-term observational documentary projects following the peace process in Myanmar.

Description: fourteen young filmmakers and six research scholars from different ethnicities in Myanmar attended the workshop to learn about the challenges facing the nation's peace process. The event was divided between experts delivering talks informed by their particular areas of research, Q&As and discussions in the entire group.

Participants then divided into smaller, breakaway groups. This led to the formation of four five-person filmmaker-researcher teams in which specific ideas were discussed and developed for a long-form documentary film project of 60-120 minutes in length.

Outcomes: the two days resulted in the development of:

- four short treatment ideas focusing on several protagonists active at different levels of the peace process
- four filming/travel budgets for the selected locations
- four filmmaker-researcher teams formed to further develop each film project.

Yangon Film School will now support the filmmaking teams to apply for funding for the further development and production of these documentary projects with the aim of creating a series of long-term observational documentaries following Myanmar's difficult road to peace.

In Myanmar, people can't speak out openly or criticise what's really going on. I believe there should be a way to highlight this oppression and violations by using the arts and media – they can be the most effective way to spread a message.

Htwe Htwe, 31, female YFS student





The Art of Docu-Animation#3: Of Peaceful Days /

15 November – 31 December at the YFS school building, Yangon

YFS Tutors: Rachel Mathews (UK) and
Debjani Mukherjee (India)
YFS-trained Tutor's Assistant Aye Nilar Kyaw
(Myanmar)

Participants: five women and seven men
*from various backgrounds and ethnicities
including Kayin Christian and Rakhine,
Myanmar-Indian, Danu and Bamar Buddhist.*

Objectives: to mentor and guide the students as they transformed four stories in the 'Of Peaceful Days' book of oral histories into short docu-animations, funded by Paung Sie Facility.

Description: the six-week course began with a two-week audio workshop led by filmmaker and screenwriter Rachel Mathews. Working with the book 'Of Peaceful Days' – a collection of interviews with ordinary people across Myanmar recollecting their peaceful interaction with neighbours of different faiths – the students drew up a shortlist of the stories based on personal interest, vividness of description and potential for animation. After intensive discussion, four stories were selected to be turned into films.

The students then went into the field – to Mandalay and the Delta (with one subject from Lashio fortuitously being in Yangon) – to re-interview the four people featured in the stories and record them telling their stories in their own words. The students returned to YFS with extensive sound files which they then shaped into clear and effective audio tracks of 4 minutes in length with a focus on vivid recollection and emotion.

The School's partners in the training were concerned that the potentially inflammatory subject matter in the book be handled with sensitivity. The students benefited from a workshop delivered by RAFT Myanmar which further sensitised them to the issues around religious difference and the way these differences can be used and abused by people and groups wishing to seed discord. Once the audio tracks had been edited and subtitled into English, the School's partners gave their feedback and granted approval for the stories to move onto the animation stage.

In the second part of the course, a four-week animation training led by Indian animator and educator Debjani Mukherjee gave the students an intensive training in animation techniques and guided them as they created the four short animations. The course was carefully structured between classroom activities, team interactions, discussions, explorations, skillset classes and self and team assessments. Screenings introduced the students to a wide range of inspiring and diverse docu-animations. Each day began with a life drawing class followed by 'acting for animators'. Experimentation and freedom of expression were strongly encouraged throughout. The groups regularly showed their work in progress and received feedback.



The Art of Docu-Animation#3: Of Peaceful Days / cont.

Being an animator on the *Our Town* docu-animation was a lot of hard work but it taught me the importance of working well in a team, and that creating good work requires time.

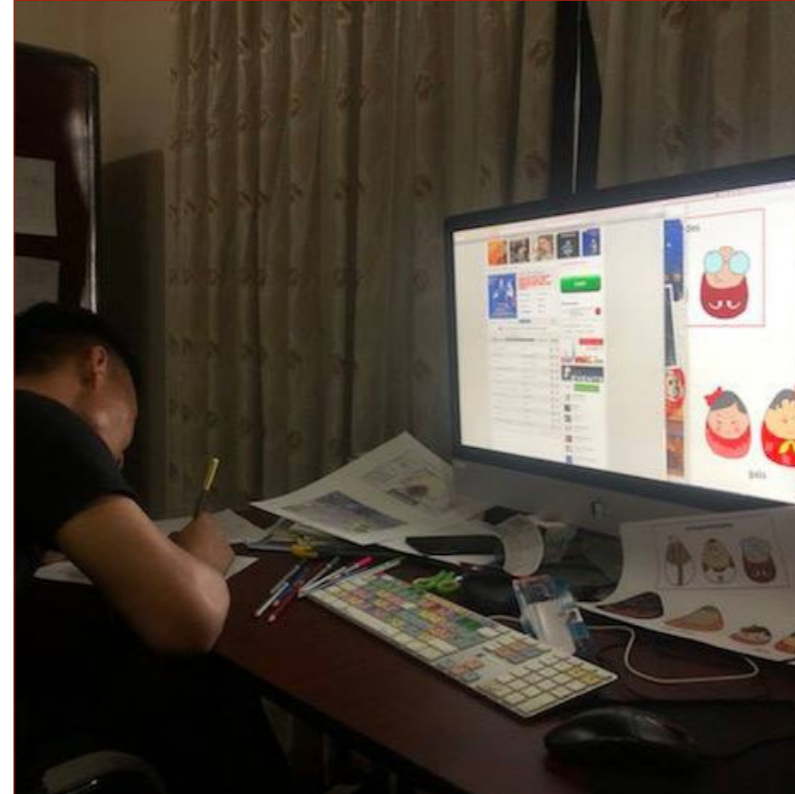
Shin Thandar, 27, female student, 2018 intake

Topics covered by the course included:

- reasons for using docu-animation (e.g. anonymising protagonists; telling stories that would be hard to film or watch as live action)
- use of visual motifs, repetition and transitions (of time and space) in animation
- use of the soundtrack – including music and sound effects – and avoiding wall-to-wall speech
- basic narrative story structure
- identifying a unifying theme and ensuring that everything in the story is connected
- giving a verbal pitch of a story and identifying the purpose of telling it
- sensitivity about the topic of religious division, including how to keep both the Bamar majority audience and (e.g. Muslim) minority audiences onside and receptive to the messages in the films
- matters to consider when delivering a specific type of film to a client, including client expectations and keeping them informed of progress
- the range of outlets for moving image work – from television to screenings, festivals, galleries and the internet.

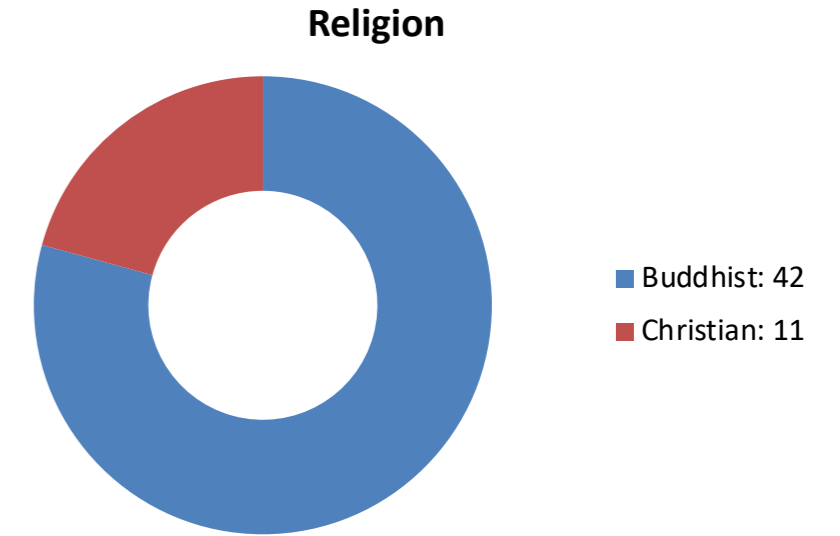
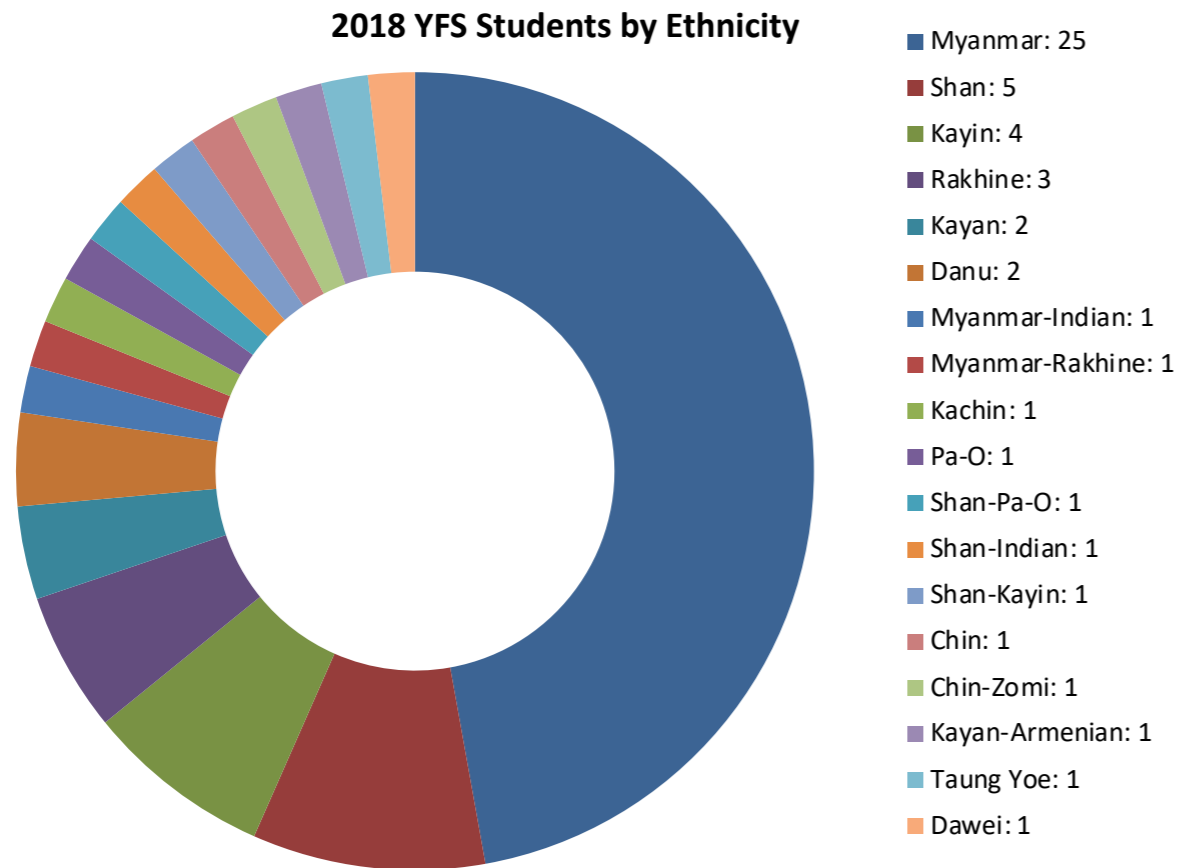
Outcomes: the course resulted in the creation of four short docu-animation films on the topic of peaceful co-existence between different faith communities in Myanmar. Descriptions of the individual films can be found on [p.7](#). In addition, the course:

1. Trained 10 students new to the docu-animation genre and deepened the skills of two students who had taken the course previously.
2. Demonstrated how visual metaphor, combined with a strong documentary voice, can make a powerful statement for social change.
3. Increased the students' awareness of religious sensitivities and inter-faith violence and gave them tools to transmit this awareness.
4. Made the students aware of the power of animation as a tool for documentary film and for social change.

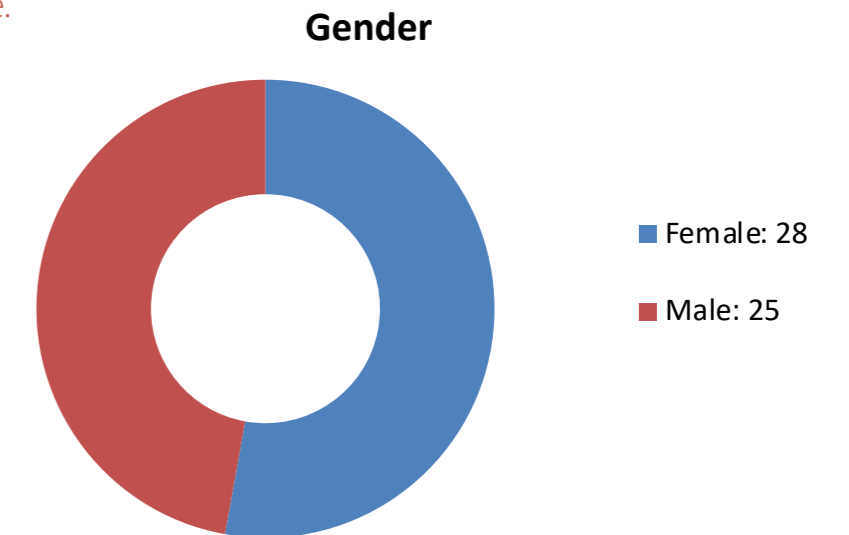


Summary of 2018 / Training Statistics

Of the 53 students trained by Yangon Film School in 2018, 53% were of an ethnicity other than the Myanmar majority, with students from a total of 18 different ethnicities trained during the year.



21% of students were of another religion (Christianity) than the Buddhist majority.
53% of students were female.



YFS Training Courses in 2019

In 2019 the School will be chiefly focusing on training the 2018 intake in their second year with YFS, expanding and deepening their knowledge and skills in the documentary form by giving them the opportunity – and a modest budget – to make a 15-minute documentary within the School's current focus of 'Youth & Peace in Myanmar'. 2017 and 2018 intakes will also have a chance to sample fiction screenwriting and filmmaking in the School's two-part 'True Fictions' course.

1 February 2018 / Call for Projects for YFS Documentary Competition

This competition is designed to encourage particularly second year students to identify and film documentary topics of their own choosing. Students submit project proposals, eight of which will be selected and financed for filming in April/May. The films will be edited during the [Second Year Advanced Editing Course](#) (see below).

2 March, May and September / Travelling Cinema

Across Myanmar

Outreach project of screenings, discussions and participatory video facilitations to give a voice to marginalised communities. In 2019 there will be three placements in remote and/or rural areas in Myanmar

3 27 May – 8 June / The Art of Screenwriting – Preparation for True Fictions I

Two weeks, non-residential at YFS

Introduction to screenwriting for 20 participants enrolled on 'True Fictions I' (fictional filmmaking with a documentary ethos). During the course, led by an international and a local tutor, each participant will create a three-minute script in combination with four other scripts to form one of four 15-minute screenplays. Participants will receive e-mentorship as they rewrite and finalise their scripts in preparation for the True Fictions production course in October/November.

4 26 June – 17 August 2019 / Second Year Advanced Editing Course

Seven weeks, residential at YFS

A mentorship for 16 students working in teams of two (director and editor) on the eight entries for the [2019 YFS Documentary Film Competition](#). Three international editing tutors will guide participants of varying experience as they shape their own films from material they have shot, transcribed and translated prior to the course. The editor-director teams will be responsible for the entire technical and artistic process: from rough assembly to locked cut.

5 19 August – 14 September / Post-Production Coaching

Four weeks, non-residential at YFS

During this coaching, students will be supported by an international tutor to post-produce the films edited during the [Second Year Advanced Editing Course](#) as entries in the [YFS Documentary Competition](#). Together with the coach and Student Trainers, they will colour grade their films and finesse the subtitles, credits and main titles.

6 16 September – 12 October / Sound Design

Four weeks, non-residential at YFS

Co-taught by two local tutors, graduates of previous sound courses and new students will be introduced to equipment and software (Digital Audio Workstations, ProTools) as well as the artistic aspects of sound design and sound post-production. In particular, students will focus on mixing the eight YFS Documentary Competition entries.

7 21 October – 2 November / The Creative Producer and True Fictions I Production

Two weeks, residential at YFS

An introduction to the role of the creative producer, including preparation and pre-production for filming the True Fiction I films. During the course (open to the 20 participants from 2017-18 intakes on the Screenwriting course), which is led by two international tutors, participants will learn about budgeting, casting, working with non-professionals, contracting, location scouting and crewing.

8 4 – 16 November / True Fictions I Filming

Two weeks, residential at YFS

Supported by two international and four local mentors, as well as tutors in camera and sound, the 20 participants from the previous course will work in crews of five to film their four three-minute scripts, swapping roles so each participant experiences the creative and practical challenges of each role (i.e. camera, sound, directing, production and location management/runner).

9 11 November – 16 December / Editing and Post-Production of True Fictions Films

Five weeks, non-residential at YFS

Supervised by an international editing mentor, four student editors and four assistant editors will edit and post-produce the four 15-minute True Fictions I films.

10 November/December / Recruitment of new intake

Following a Call published in October/November, interviews will be undertaken with 60+ applicants for the new YFS intake of 12 students (6 men and 6 women) to be recruited for the YFS three-year study programme commencing in February 2020.



FILMS

Films Produced in 2018 /

In 2018, YFS students made **eight short documentaries** and **nine evaluation films** about the YFS training courses that took place throughout the year. They also facilitated the making of **two Participatory Videos** and created **eight innovative docu-animation films**.

Stand up for Women! Stand up for Peace! – Docu-Animations

In The Art of Docu-Animation#2 course (see pp.12), YFS students made four short animated documentaries about the gender-based violence experienced by women in conflict zones across Myanmar. The films are intended to describe to Myanmar and international audiences the situation of women on the ground, show the human cost of conflict and underline the fact that any concept of peace is incomplete if it does not include security and justice for women.

The films are now screening at festivals and have been talking points at events in Myanmar – including a high-profile screening in Yangon's Mahabandoola Park on International Women's Day – and in India and Switzerland. They have also been released on YFS's online channels.

Limbo

Animation and audio interviews: Nwaye Zar Che Soe, Saw Eh Doh Poe, Nann Win May Aye

The hard-hitting story of a 19-year-old woman who is raped by her uncle, and the challenges she encounters to break her silence and bring up a son born from the sexual assault.

Home

Animation and audio interviews: Maung Nay Oo, Aung Ngwe Phyo, Thida Swe

About a woman living with her family in a camp for internally displaced people. She recalls how war has changed everything and reveals her longing to return to her village.

Kayah Lily

Animation and audio interviews: Mi Mi Lwin, Aein Mek Cheimt Cheimt, Htwe Htwe

In *Kayah Lily*, a 13-year-old girl recalls the trauma of being raped by a soldier in the woods but how, with the support of teachers and her family, she has succeeded in making a new life for herself.

Wave

Animation and audio interviews: Sai Naw Kham, Mon Mon Thet Khin, Soe Yu Maw

A striking black and white film about an independent humanitarian activist from Shan State who shares her journey of how she battled personal challenges to carve a path for herself helping other people.

Beginner Documentaries – Final Films /

As part of *The Art of Documentary Filmmaking For Beginners* (see pp.17), the 2018 intake of 12 students made four first exercises and four final films on the broad topic of 'Youth & Peace in Myanmar'. These will be released in 2019 as single DVDs and in a compilation that includes an evaluation film about the course featuring interviews with the students and tutors. The films are already being entered into film festivals around the world and will hopefully be disseminated in Myanmar on television as well as via the School's online channels.

Burmese Rapper / 13'06"

Director: May Myat Noe Aye, Camera: Thant Zin Aung, Sound Recordist: Seint Yamone Htoo, Editor: Mi Mi Lwin

Long-haired and skinny Mandalay rapper Wareru expounds his approach to life and music in this offbeat portrait of one of the artists in Myanmar's nascent hip-hop scene. You don't have to be Shan to wear Shan trousers, claims this wordsmith, but you might have to go back to your Burmese history books to understand all the references in his lyrics.

Going Home / 18'05"

Director: Chit Moe Pio, Camera: Aye Chan, Sound: Aung Htet Myet, Editor: May Htoo Cho

Young filmmaker Chit Moe Pio visits his native village in Myanmar's Kayah State and reconnects with his hill-farming family and a way of life marked by privation but rich in tradition that has remained unchanged for centuries. His presence rekindles old arguments between his siblings and his mother, reminding him all too keenly of the sacrifices each has made so that he can have an education.

Husband & Wife / 15'42"

Director: Mhwe Ngin Seng, Camera: Htun Tauk Moe Thu, Sound Recordist: Mann Pyae Phyo Aung, Editor: Khin Warso

A short but telling portrait of a physics professor and his doting wife in Taunggyi in Shan State who have been married for forty years. While the professor teaches the next generation of physicists, his wife focuses on the smooth running of their home and a tragedy in their marriage is gradually revealed.

Lost Boy / 14'54"

Director: Shin Thandar, Camera: Moe Kyaw Thu, Sound Recordist: Ja Roi Aung, Editor: Thida Swe

Thant Zin came to Yangon with his brother when he was around 12. After finding him a job at a car wash, his brother returned home, leaving Thant Zin behind. Now 15 and deeply unhappy in his badly paid job, Thant longs to go home – but can't remember where his village is, or even its name. His fate is shared by many children and young adults migrating from rural Myanmar to the city in search of work and a better life.



Participatory Videos /

During the Introduction to Participatory Video course, **eight YFS students** facilitated...

Towards a Clean Future

Made by the ChuChu organisation in Dala township near Yangon, this short video reveals the pollution problem caused by people discarding plastic waste and other packaging materials and the damage it is causing to the environment, in particular the river. The video then details the work of ChuChu and its members as they collect this waste and transform it into useful objects – including belts made from old tyres and bags constructed from plastic sheets – that local people can sell and use.

The video premiered alongside screenings of other YFS documentaries and PV films in a local church in Dala in June 2018 and was followed by a short lecture on plastic pollution and recycling at an event attended by an audience of around 40 local people.

Safe Migration

Made by NET organisation, the video showcases personal testimonies of people who encountered problems when migrating for work (e.g. to Thailand) and then explains the procedures people should undergo to migrate safely, what they can do if they get into trouble and the work undertaken by NET to train and help people in this situation.

The video premiered alongside screenings of other YFS documentaries and PV films at the Pansuriya Art Gallery in downtown Yangon in June 2018 to an audience of around 60, followed by a lively Q&A session where participants highlighted the importance of the video in raising awareness of safe migration among migrant workers. The event was covered by Channel K with a short feature broadcast on MRTV-4.

Both PVs now form part of the YFS Travelling Cinema screenings which are held across Myanmar on a regular basis. They are also being used by ChuChu and NET as part of their communications strategies.

All YFS participatory videos are uploaded to the YFS YouTube channel and other social media, including those of partner organisations and are distributed on DVDs in the communities.

Anyone can participate, anyone can raise their voice and be heard. This is what I really like about the participatory video process.

Female student, 2018 YFS Participatory Video course



'Of Peaceful Days' – Docu-Animations /

In *The Art of Docu-Animation#3* course (see p. 37), the 12 students made four short animated documentaries based on oral histories in the book 'Of Peaceful Days', where ordinary Myanmar people recollected living in peaceful coexistence with friends and neighbours from other ethnicities and religions. Made in partnership with Paung Sie Facility, the films will be released in 2019 in a careful dissemination and education strategy targeting social media such as facebook and YouTube. The audio interviews in the films will also be broadcast on the radio.

Beyond the Hatred

Animation and audio interviews: Nyein Chan Myo, Moe Kyaw Thu, May Myat Noe Aye

A middle-aged Buddhist woman in Shan State recalls her friendship with a Muslim man with whom she went on hunger strike as a political activist in 1988. As religious violence breaks out in Shan in 2013, she finds herself caught up in a wave of anti-Muslim feeling. But when her friend's life is in danger, she puts aside her hatred to help him.

More than Skin Deep

Animation and audio interviews: Mhwe Ngin Seng, Sai Whira Linn Khant, Zin Oo Maung

A young Muslim woman describes how discrimination has had a deep effect on her, but also how her close friendship with a Buddhist girl – in which they discuss their differences and similarities without recriminations – has saved her from anger and bitterness.

Riding the Waves

Animation and audio interviews: Aye Mya Hlaing, Aung Ngwe Phyoo, Sein Yamone Htoo

A middle-aged Buddhist man recalls his lifelong friendship with a Muslim colleague at the Red Cross and reveals how Buddhists and Muslims worked together in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Nargis.

Our Town

Animation and audio interviews: Saw Eh Doh Poe, Htun Tauk Moe Thu, Shin Thandar

A young Buddhist man's memories of the joyous celebrations in his religiously mixed neighbourhood become overshadowed by mistrust in the wake of religious tension, until the townspeople decide to reject fear and hatred in favour of celebrating their communality as before.





ဘိန်းစိုက်တောင်သူ

တာမြစ်သီးနှံများကို စိုက်ပျိုးထုတ်လုပ်နေကြသူတို့၏ ဘဝပုံရိပ်

Opium Farmer

The lives of producers of prohibited plants in Myanmar



မုန်တိုင်းစောင့်ကြည့်သူများ
STORM WATCHERS

မုန်တိုင်းမလာခင် ကြိုတင်ပြင်ဆင်
PREPARING FOR NATURAL HAZARDS HAND IN HAND



ပျောက်ဆုံးလေသော
မဲဇာမြိုင်

မြန်မာ့အနာဂတ်သစ် ဝိမိုစိမ်းလန်းစေရေးအတွက် အတူတကွလုပ်ဆောင်ကြပါစို့

the vanishing forest

working together for a greener future in Myanmar



Yangon Film Services is the production arm of Yangon Film School. Established in 2006 to train local talent to produce films in the context of humanitarian service and development in Myanmar, this social enterprise has to date produced over 60 tailor-made films for a wide range of local and international organisations, as well as providing meaningful and sustainable work for YFS students and graduates. The company also provides skilled local crews for international production companies filming in the country.

In 2018, a total of 25 YFS students and alumni were able to earn income working as freelance crew members and filmmakers on four large-scale commissions. The School's production arm worked with national and international NGOs and other organisations including the EU delegation in Myanmar, the British Council (via MyJustice and Pyoe Pin organisations), the Transnational Institute and Malteser International.

Yangon Film Services commissions in 2018 included:

The Vanishing Forest – Working Together for a Greener Future in Myanmar

(18'35"; Burmese with English subtitles)

Myanmar has one of the fastest deforestation rates in the world. Protecting the forests requires the cooperation of the government, private sector and civil society. Myanmar's Forest Law Enforcement, Government and Trade Action Plan (known as FLEGT) is a process that is bringing together the government, timber industry and civil society to develop ways to fight illegal logging and ensure all exported timber is legal.

Made in cooperation with FLEGT; funded by the European Union

Opium Farmer – the Lives of Producers of Prohibited Plants in Myanmar

(21'; Pa-O and Palaung language with Burmese and English subtitles)

Myanmar is the second-largest opium producer in the world; its cultivation is often the only viable cash crop for poor farmers in remote areas of Kachin and Shan states. The Myanmar government is carrying out forced eradication to reduce opium production, but without sufficiently considering the farmers. The Myanmar Opium Farmers Forum (MOFF) protects farmers' rights and helps them to become involved in drug policy design and alternative livelihood development. This film sensitively portrays the lives of two opium farming families.

Made in cooperation with MOFF; funded by the Transnational Institute

Storm Watchers: Preparing for Natural Hazards Hand in Hand

(12'27"; Rakhine language with Burmese and English subtitles)

Globally, Myanmar is the second most vulnerable country to extreme weather events. Every year, coastal communities in Rakhine State face cyclones and disastrous flooding. This film shows the benefits of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation from the perspective of three Rakhine villagers who give a first-hand account of the most significant changes that DRR has brought to their lives.

Made for Malteser International

Yangon Film Services: Writing Season Two of 'The Sun, the Moon & The Truth' /

In 2018, Yangon Film Services oversaw the final script development of the 10 x 30 minute scripts for series two of the popular Myanmar TV drama **The Sun, The Moon & The Truth** for the **British Council** via **MyJustice** and **Pyoe Pin** NGOs. Set in a fictional Justice Centre that mirrors the actual Justice Centres that MyJustice is setting up around Myanmar, the series is designed to teach Myanmar audiences about the rule of law; it also explores some of the pressing legal issues people are facing across the country and demonstrates how Justice Centre lawyers – and ordinary people themselves – can address them.

Yangon Film Services employed six female Myanmar screenwriters previously trained by Yangon Film School to write the scripts. Receiving mentoring throughout the project by YFS-screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews (UK), the writers were:

Thwe Myo Nyunt (eps. 1 & 2 on illegal money-lending)

'My story is about a couple that borrows money from a loan shark. They sign a fraudulent contract and almost lose their home. This is something that is happening right now in Myanmar... I believe this story will help those facing oppressive situations like this.'

Mal Khaing (eps. 3 & 4 on corruption in government offices)

'Many people don't think it's wrong to bribe an official... But if we are to improve and develop Myanmar, we'll have to get to grips with this gigantic mechanism of corruption. At the very least, I hope the audience will learn how they can deal with bribery and corruption.'

Saw Yu Nwe (eps. 3 & 4 on people trafficking)

'There were many challenges writing these scripts. It would be dreadful to get the facts wrong... so it was a huge responsibility. I've learnt so much. It's my first time working on a drama series and I'm thrilled!'

Eve Eve Kyaw (eps. 5 & 6 on narcotics)

'My episodes show how drug dealers manipulate young people... and how, when drug users become social outcasts, this only succeeds in driving them back into addiction. We want to encourage communities to give such people a helping hand.'

Su Su Hlaing (eps. 7 & 8 on gender-based violence)

'I really wanted the audience to understand that a perpetrator can be a relative, friend or even a fiancé. And I wanted to encourage survivors to report rape as a crime... I really hope these episodes will help and touch people's hearts.'

Cho Wutyi Lwin (eps. 9 & 10 on land-grabbing)

'It took almost two years to develop the scripts. We had to make it feel real, as if this Justice Centre really exists. We wanted the audience to feel a Justice Centre is where they can go with their legal problems... This was really crucial.'



Yangon Film Services: Editing and Postproducing Season Two of 'The Sun, the Moon & The Truth'

'Watching the rushes while editing this series gave me a great opportunity to see how a professional director shoots his scenes so I can learn from his techniques.'

YFS Trainee Editor, 'The Sun, the Moon & the Truth' / Season Two

After series two was filmed in early 2018 by Myanmar film director Aung Ko Latt and overseen by producer Grace Swe Zin Htaik with a cast of well-known Myanmar actors, Yangon Film Services undertook the entire editing and post-production process for the series.

Over a period of eight months, YFS-trained editors, sound designers, colour graders and title/subtitle designers were mentored by YFS editing tutor Melanie Sandford (Australia) to complete the series to an international standard. YFS also oversaw the addition of music and completed a number of spots and trailers to advertise the series.

Series two of *The Sun, The Moon & The Truth* was screened on four Myanmar TV channels in September 2018 – on MRTV, Myawaddy TV, Mizzima TV and DVB TV – as well as being released on YouTube and Facebook.

As part of the MyJustice community outreach plan, the series is currently being screened in mobile vans across the country. In addition, the scripts created by YFS have been turned into graphic novels and community theatre shows and are now being taken to towns and villages across Myanmar.



YFS Films and Students at Festivals in 2018 /

Screening YFS films at national and international festivals helps raise the School's profile and promotes the work of its filmmakers. Screenings also give YFS the opportunity to convey information about democracy and diversity contained in its films and raise international awareness about the lives and concerns the people of Myanmar, including the urban and rural poor and marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

In 2018, a total of 61 YFS films screened at 33 festivals in 21 different countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, USA, Iran, Germany, Japan and China. The School's films won four prizes and nine students had the opportunity to travel with their films to present them in person at the festival.

Among the School's most successful festival films of 2018 were:

My Leg (10' documentary directed by Khon Soe Moe Aung)

For over 60 years in Kayah state, different ethnic armed groups have been fighting the Burmese Army in a war for freedom and independence. A group of war veterans have opened an artificial leg workshop constructing 100 legs per year for fellow veterans with the same stroke of fate – leaving ethnic differences behind. Made in 2015 as part of a co-operation with Search for Common Ground NGO, the film continued its sustained festival success in 2018 by winning the **Best Student Film Award at the German International Ethnographic Film Festival in Koblenz.**

Mother at Arms (21'20" documentary directed by Nu Nu Hlaing)

Mi Sue Pwint is a member of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front, the student army formed after nationwide protests were brutally crushed by Myanmar's military dictatorship in 1988. This film tells her extraordinary story as both a leading revolutionary and mother and describes how she is now actively engaged in the peace process in her deeply conflicted country. After premiering at the Wathann Film Festival in Yangon, the film won the **Golden Comma Award for Best Documentary at the Alpavirama Film Festival in Ahmedabad, India.**

Films screened in 2018: **61 films at 33 festivals in 21 different countries**
winning 4 prizes

Most screened: **My Leg, Sugar & Spice,**
Seeds of Sadness and Mother at Arms



Australia Days for YFS students in 2018 /

2018 also saw a number of YFS students travelling for the first time to Australia to attend two exciting events:

Aye Nilar Kyaw, (25) who joined YFS in 2016, received a UNFPA scholarship to attend the **2018 International Youth Media Summit (IYMS) in Sydney from 24 July to 9 August**. IYMS is an annual two-week event that brings together young people from different cultures to create media projects aimed at inspiring their own generation to take action and responsibility for the future. During this event Aye Nilar Kyaw connected with young people from around the world to explore ways to utilise media and communications to promote development goals – such as young people’s knowledge about reproductive health as well as youth, peace and security.

*‘[At IYMS] I saw a new perspective: that **women can do any job**. I want people in my country to think the same way. **Myanmar women can be good leaders and I hope we’ll get the same equal rights and opportunities as men to try. By working together we can make this positive change.**’*

YFS student Aye Nilar Kyaw

Three YFS alumni – **Wai Mar Nyunt, Sai Naw Kham and Thet Oo Maung** – received travel grants from The Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) Mobility First programme to enable them to take part in the exciting Southeast Asian dialogue platform **Borak Arts in Adelaide from 1 to 3 November 2018**. This year Borak Arts (<https://www.borakarts.com/>) focused on the theme ‘Amplifying Exchanges’, looking in particular at cultural connections between Southeast Asia & Australia. The event, which was held outside Malaysia for the first time, took place at the OzAsia Festival.





Travelling Cinema Screenings of Women & Peace Films /

‘Wars are not created by women, but women are always there to shape the future: when war breaks out, when peace is shattered, when poverty goes viral (...) **It is essential to bring them to the negotiating tables in the country’s peace process!’**

Nu Nu Hlaing, YFS Student

During 2018 and in early 2019, Yangon Film School films on the topic of Women & Peace in Myanmar continued to find diverse audiences of **almost 3,500 people at 11 curated screenings across the country** – from Rakhine to Shan, Kayah and Chin and also in Burmese migrant communities in Mae Sot in Thailand.

Audiences ranged from experts on the peace process and social cohesion to members of ethnic armed organisations and youth groups, and the children of migrant workers, all of whom enjoyed a mixed programme of documentaries and docu-animations. For many, this was the first time that they had seen a documentary or a docu-animation, much less one made by Myanmar filmmakers and set in far-flung parts of the country such as Chin or Kachin.

These screenings provided YFS filmmakers with a valuable opportunity to interact with **audiences** and explore some of the often-sensitive themes of their films with viewers. Director Nu Nu Hlaing (*Mother At Arms*) joined a distinguished group of panellists discussing the potential for women to reanimate the country’s stalled peace process at an International Women’s Day event at the Institut Français on 5 March, 2019.



EVENTS



Minister of Information Visits YFS /

On Sunday, 11 November 2018, Yangon Film School was delighted to welcome the Minister of Information, U Pe Myint, to its premises in Yankin Township, Yangon. School founder and director Lindsey Merrison and her staff greeted the Minister and showed him round. U Pe Myint then spent an hour meeting students and alumni, viewing their work and discussing it and their plans for the future. This was the first time the School has been honoured by an official visit by a minister from the Myanmar government.

Premiere of 'The Sun, The Moon & The Truth' (Season Two) /

Series two of *The Sun, The Moon & The Truth* – for which Yangon Film Services, produced the scripts and undertook the complete post-production – was launched at a celebrity-rich premiere on 31 August 2018 in JCGV Cineplex at Junction City in Yangon.

H. E. Kristian Schmidt, Ambassador of the European Union to Myanmar, was the guest of honour. The premiere also featured appearances by the famous Myanmar actors starring in the show alongside the rest of the cast and crew, including YFS students and staff. The event was covered by over 50 local media outlets.

In his opening speech, Ambassador H. E. Kristian Schmidt, said:

'In a democracy, the law should be about what is fair and right, not who is the strongest or the richest. For such a democratic system to function, people need to know their rights, and by whom and where they will be protected. The Sun, The Moon & The Truth is an excellent way to discuss these issues, and the European Union is proud to support it.'

Caitlin Reiger, Team Leader of MyJustice upon whose real Justice Centres the TV series is based, added:

'The Sun, the Moon & the Truth Season 2 is the first step in beginning a public conversation about what justice means to ordinary people. We want to hear what people have to say – through a follow-on campaign called Let's talk (Pyaw Kya Mal) – as we believe the media can not just entertain but can also facilitate that conversation about how the law can protect people's rights far and wide, in teashops, in people's homes and offices.'



YFS Students Attend PSVI Workshop in London /

Yangon Film School was invited by the British Embassy in Yangon to nominate two of its filmmakers to attend a capacity building programme in London as part of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) film festival.

YFS filmmaker and editing student **Sai Naw Kham** and screenwriter **Saw Yu Nwe** were selected to attend the three-day programme in London from 21-23 November 2018. They also attended the 'Fighting Stigma Through Film' festival on the **23 and 24 November** at the British Film Institute (BFI). The workshop and festival aimed to harness the power of film and cinema to help fight the discrimination faced by survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Over the two days, 38 films and documentaries from around the world were screened – sharing stories of survivors and the inspiring people working alongside them.

While in London, Sai Naw Kham and Saw Yu Nwe – neither of whom had been on an airplane or travelled abroad before – attended the workshop and screenings and also managed to fit in a whistle-stop tour of the sights. They met and took part in workshops with some of the impressive guests at the event including 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr Denis Mukwege and Hollywood film star and director Angelina Jolie in her capacity as UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) Special Envoy.

YFS Annual Screening /

Now an established Yangon event, the 2018 YFS Annual Screening was hosted by the Goethe Institut Myanmar in the newly built screening room next to their beautifully restored villa in Bahan Township, Yangon on Wednesday **28 November 2018**.

Around **250 students, alumni and guests** from Myanmar's Motion Picture Development Department (MMPDD) and Myanmar Motion Picture Organization, the media as well as arts and development sectors and civil society in Myanmar attended the evening reception – so many in fact, that an additional screen was set up in the piazza outside to cater for the overflow. The event was opened by head of the Goethe-Institut Myanmar Mr Franz Xaver Augustin and hosted by YFS Director Lindsey Merrison.

The screening was an opportunity to show brand new films made by the 2018 intake of YFS students including a film About the School's Docuanimation#2 course as well as teasers and interviews with the writers of *The Sun, The Moon & The Truth* and one of the participatory videos facilitated by YFS students in 2018, *Towards a Clean Future* (see p.49).





မိတ်ဆက်ပွဲ အခမ်းအနား



MIDO/Telenor Web-TV Series Launch /

In 2017, MIDO (Myanmar ICT for Development Organization) and Telenor Myanmar commissioned YFS to create 30 x 3 minute scripts for a drama series with interactive elements suitable for Smartphone viewing. The aim of the series, part of MIDO's Digital Lighthouse project, was to educate people in an entertaining way about how to use mobile phones, the benefits of connectivity (e.g. for job searches, learning a language, research into farming methods and for small businesses, etc) and how to stay safe online (including password safety and how to avoid/deal with phishing scams, online bullying and sexting).

Working with YFS screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews, six YFS-trained scriptwriters wrote the series in close collaboration with MIDO/Telenor to streamline the messaging and training elements. The scripts were delivered in July 2017 and the series, entitled 'Let the Dreams Come True' and starring Daung Wai, William Tun and Moe Pwint Phyu, was filmed later that year. The programme tells the story of three young people from a village in rural Myanmar who are seeking to achieve their dreams while negotiating life and love in contemporary Myanmar.

The series was launched at the Telenor Myanmar Head Office in Yangon on **5 December 2018** with the screenwriters Cham Htet Han, Cho Wutyi Lwin, Soe Thiha, Thwe Myo Nyunt, Saw Yu Nwe and Eve Eve Kyaw as well as Yangon Film Services' Production Coordinator Wit Hmone Phoo Pwint and YFS Country Director Aleksandra Minkiewicz in attendance.

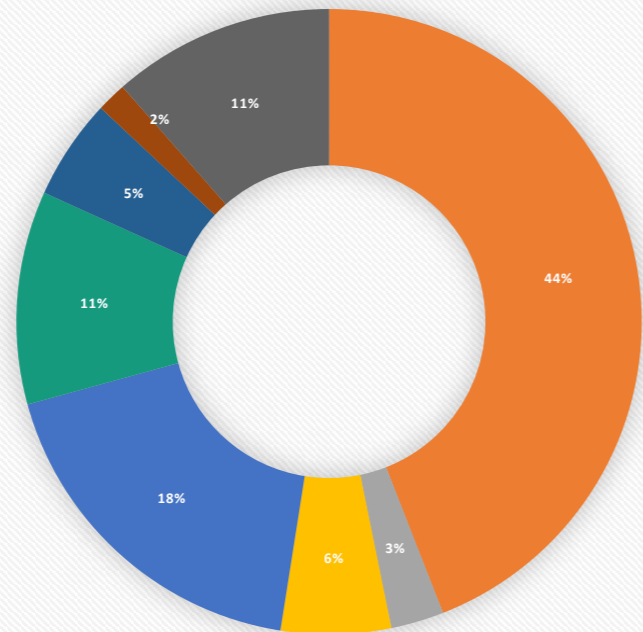
Min Thu, head of Business Sustainability of Telenor Myanmar, said at the launch:

'We know that Myanmar people from both rural and urban areas enjoy watching TV series. That is why we thought disseminating digital literacy through this platform could be one of the most suitable ways to expand our initiative. With the power of entertainment, we aim for more people to access the programme even in the palm of their hand and to improve their digital knowledge easily and conveniently.'

The episodes are **currently being released** via the **Telenor Myanmar Facebook** page and are available on Telenor Myanmar's **YouTube and WowBox** channels.

VIKES - The Finnish Foundation for Media, Communication and Development / Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs	160,942 €
Goethe Institut	10,000 €
French Embassy (PISCCA Fund)	20,777 €
UNFPA	66,646 €
Bread for the World	40,300 €
British Embassy / Foreign & Commonwealth Office	19,010 €
SOAS (London, UK)	5,647 €
Donations and membership fees	41,928 €

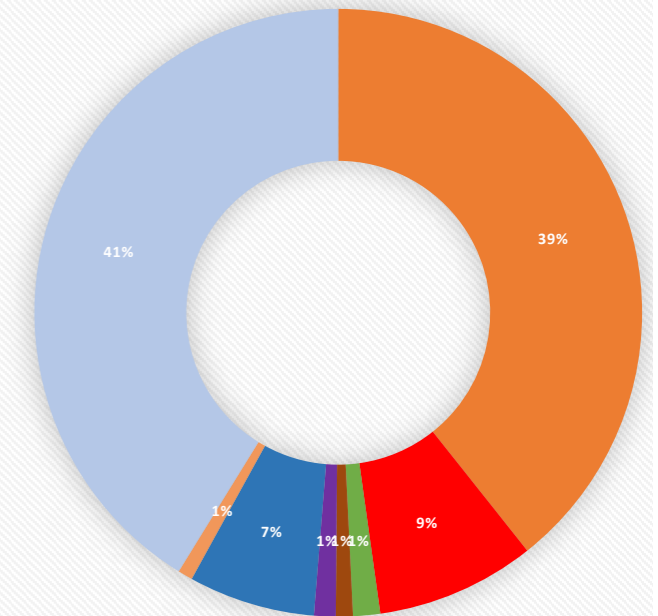
Yangon Film School Funding 2018



Total funding in 2018:
365,249 EUR

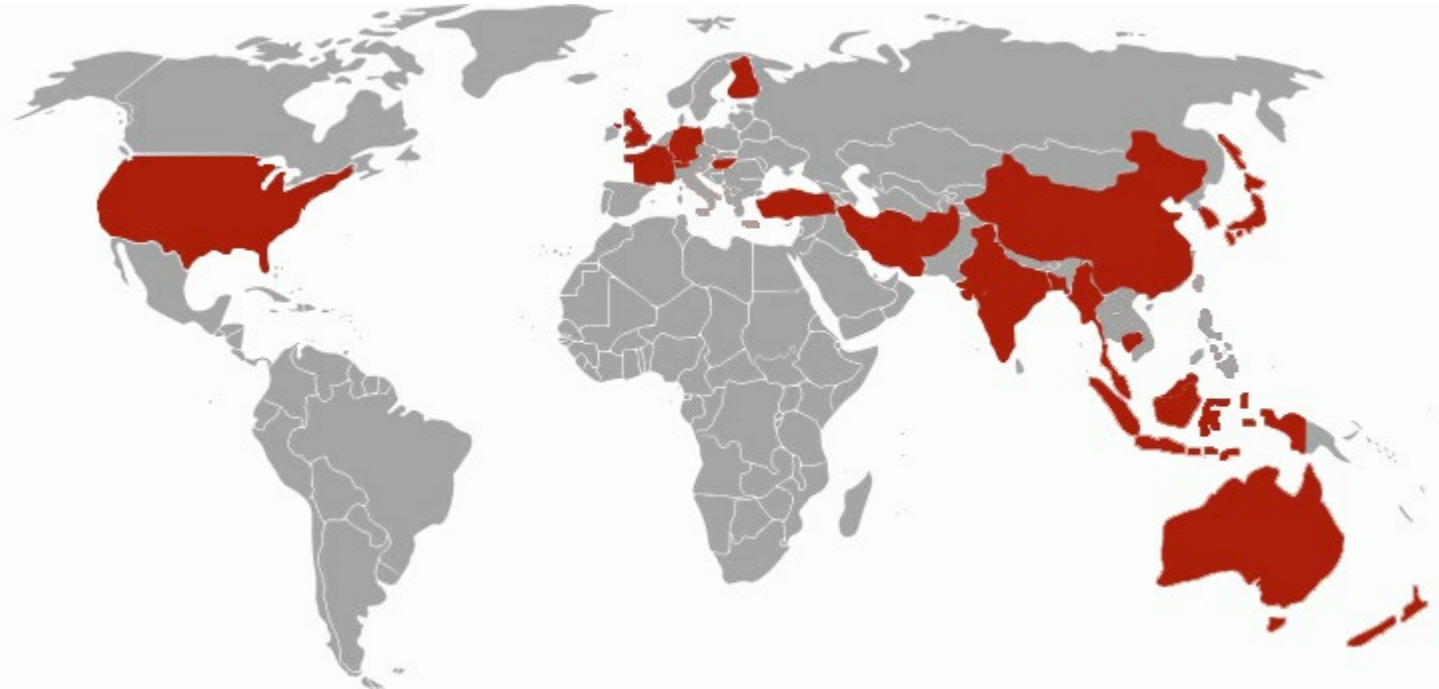
Course delivery costs	143,598 €
Office and Training Venue Rentals	30,946 €
Equipment and Services	5,252 €
Post Production	3,300 €
Production Grants & Scholarships	4,210 €
Festivals, Visibility and Outreach, Travelling Cinema	24,586 €
Monitoring & Evaluation	2,868 €

Yangon Film School Expenditure 2018



Total expenditure in 2018:
365,249 EUR

Festival Map /

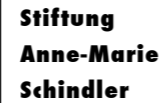


In 2018,
61 YFS films screened at 33 festivals in 21 different countries

including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, South Korea, Iran, Germany, Malaysia, Japan and China.



The Yangon Film School
would like to thank all of its partners in 2018 for their support



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