STORIES OF CHANGE IN MYANMAR 2011
Three documentaries about development projects made by students of the Yangon Film School

In late 2011 and early 2012, Yangon Film School filmmakers were sought out by local and international non-governmental organisations to document their development work in Myanmar. Filmed in Kyauk Phyu Township in Rakhine State in north-western Myanmar, A Step Forward takes a look at how local NGO Better Life is improving livelihoods in coastal communities following Cyclone Giri, which made landfall in October, 2011. Rakhine’s striking coastal landscape is also at the centre of More than a Tree which describes a successful mangrove reforestation project spearheaded by Malteser International. We follow another coastal community in Let’s Get on the Bus. In this film made for Save the Children we find out how children and adults in Deedugone Township in the Ayeyarwady Delta joined forces to convert an old truck into a school bus.

These three short documentary films provide yet another engaging insight into how development organisations are promoting change in Myanmar. They also demonstrate the role that YFS filmmakers are playing in illuminating their efforts.

Produced by Yangon Film Services and Yangon Film School e.V. Berlin in association with the following organisations:

In 2011 the Yangon Film School Workshops were supported by:

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DVD PAL | 16:9 & 4:3 | English Subtitles | 52mins
More than a Tree

Directors: Philipp Danao, Khin Myanmar, Camera: Aung Ko Ko, Sound: War War Hlaing, Editor: Myo Min Khin
Editing Mentor: Regina Bärtschi

Duration: 15'36"

Every year, coastal communities in Rakhine State on the north-western coast of Myanmar are exposed to the threat of floods and cyclones. Between 2008 and 2011, Malteser International and Mangrove Service Network (NSN) helped two villages in Sitwe Township to plant and grow over 10,000 mangroves—thus safeguarding the lives of more than 5,000 people. Punctuated by striking images of the coastal landscape, this short documentary describes the critical importance of mangrove restoration in reducing disaster risks aggravated by the changing environment; it also shows how the women of these villages in particular have become part of an eco-vision to protect and help their communities.

Twenty-four-year-old English graduate Khin Myanmar’s interest in film began as a teenager when her Burmese film editor father U Kyaw Zwar first regaled her with stories of filmmaking. Having directed her first film The Dream during the 2011 Art of Documentary Filmmaking workshop, she teamed up with Malteser International’s Disaster Risk Reduction Coordinator Philipp Danao to co-direct More than a Tree, her first commission for an NGO client.

Let’s Get on the Bus

Directors: Okkar, Camera: Aung Ko Ko, Sound: Zaw Win Htwe, Editor: Hnin Ei Hlaing, Editing Mentor: Regina Bärtschi

Duration: 15'51"

Save the Children’s Child Rights Governance Programme supports and builds the capacity of children and civil society organisations to work for the realisation of children’s rights. Let’s Get on the Bus describes how the children of one Ayeayarwaddy Delta community joined forces with a local community-based organisation in order to convert an old truck into a school bus—thus promoting school attendance and local civil society governance processes. As the photogenic vehicle chugs its way along coastal paths, teenager Nyi Nyi Lwin of Nyi Myo Set Thi Children’s Group and warm and dedicated father-of-three U Aung Win of the community-based organisation Deedegone Karuna Social Aid Association, share their motivations for getting involved in this and other projects, and tell us how they hope to inspire others to work towards improving the lives of children and adults alike.

Maung Okkar’s film career began at the age of 14 when he starred in Dat-hke, a feature film directed by his father—the celebrated Burmese filmmaker U Wunna. Made during a YFS workshop in 2009, Okkar’s first documentary Charcoal Boy screened to acclaim at a number of international film festivals. His second work as a director was The Game, a gritty documentary about the cut and thrust of Myanmar kickboxing, which was shown during the inaugural Art of Freedom Film Festival in Yangon in 2011. Let’s Get on the Bus marks his first commissioned work for an NGO.

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A Step Forward

Director: Sann Maw Aung, Camera: Kyaw Ko Ko, Sound: Mya Darli Aung, Editor: Naing Oo, Editing Mentor: Regina Bärtschi

Duration: 20'15"

Cyclone Giri struck the western coast of Rakhine State on 22 October 2011, severely impacting on the lives of farmers, agricultural labourers and fisherfolk in the coastal townships of Kyaukphyu, Myeik, Myepon and Paungdaw. Soon after Giri, Better Life, a local non-governmental organisation co-founded by YFS filmmaker Lay Thida, began a livelihood recovery programme in some of the affected communities. This short documentary brings us closer to the lives of three beneficiaries—teashop owner Daw Nu Nu Shwe and farmers Daw Khine Mar Oo and U Tun—and describes how Better Life’s programmes have helped them to become confident and active members of their communities.

Journalist and blogger Sann Maw Aung is of Rakhine descent. A regular contributor to Yangon-based periodicals such as ‘The Voice’, ‘Living Color’ and more recently, ‘Envoy’, she has a deep-seated interest in educational and environmental issues. Having made her directorial debut Middle of the Road during the 2009 YFS Art of Documentary Filmmaking workshop, A Step Forward marks her first commission for an NGO. She is currently researching a project in Kachin State about those who have been forced to flee from their homes as a result of civil strife in this region.

Let’s Get on the Bus

Director: Okkar