Courses like this one are very rare indeed ... I don’t know of any others like it. YFS is really exceptional. I hope the film school goes from strength to strength.

Zin Mar Oo, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop

I used to watch films without thinking about them but now I can analyse what’s going on. I started with zero knowledge but I definitely know something now!

Cho Phyone, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop
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Annual Report

I Summary of Activities in 2012

Year Eight of the Yangon Film School saw another busy round of workshops, teaching modules and mentorships and a new intake of multiethnic participants. In 2012 the Yangon Film School held seven workshops, two clinics and two mentorships in Yangon for a total of 61 men and women. There were two residential and five semi- or non-residential workshops. Once again, there was an emphasis on attracting recruits from different ethnic groups and different parts of Myanmar and this was reflected in the intake for the Beginners’ course, half of whom came from locations outside Yangon. In 2012 the chosen topic for final film assignments was ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People who live in them’. In 2012 practical training took place exclusively on HD camera equipment using HD workflows. The emphasis in 2012 was on introducing the new intake to documentary filmmaking, screenwriting and sound design, and furthering the filmmaking and teaching skills of previous cohorts.

Transition at YFS: the YFS Committee, Management Training & Local Management Team

The YFS Management Coach visited Yangon three times between November 2011 and June 2012 to assist the YFS Committee during the School’s transition process into the hands of local management. He also conducted a Management Training Workshop to identify four new staff members who were subsequently taken on for a probationary period. The coach returned to Yangon for a fourth time in August 2012 to help the new staff integrate and to monitor their progress. During this time he identified a number of communication and behavioural problems. These proved insurmountable in the case of three staff members who, at the end of the probationary period, handed in their resignation, anticipating a decision by the YFS Committee not to offer them annual contracts. The fourth recruit was successfully integrated into the YFS management team.

A new YFS Committee was voted into office in September 2012. The new members are filmmaker and YFS trainer Shin Daewe; filmmaker, YFS trainer and development worker Eh Mwee, who is also a member of the Advisory Board to President Thein Sein; cinematographer and YFS trainer Aung Ko Ko; editor, sound recordist, YFS editing equipment manager and trainer Myo Min Khin; and finally, filmmaker Soe Moe Aung, who is a member of the 2012 intake.

Lessons having been learned from the management recruitment and training programme, this Committee has returned to a solution that was once mooted but suspended due to a lack of suitable candidates, namely to integrate a YFS alumnus or Committee member into the management team as School Manager. Following a restricted call for applicants among YFS members at the end of 2012, this position was successfully filled by Thet Oo Maung, a graduate of the 2012 Beginner workshops. The current management team therefore now includes two YFS filmmakers: Thet Oo Maung as School Manager and Hnin Ei Hlaing as Production Manager, and two non-filmmaking staff, Win Naing Khir and Aye Ni Mar, the Administrator and Accountant respectively. With two female and two male staff members, there is gender parity in the management team. Instead of an external coach, the Committee has decided that in future the transition process should follow a more organic and less formal learning-on-the-job approach, under the supervision of the YFS Director during her presence in Yangon. The success of this approach, however, places additional demands on the YFS Director and depends on local YFS staff’s initiative and commitment to future challenges.

(i) Comments

If the school is to achieve its long-term goal of transition to a permanent, locally run media resource, YFS will in 2013 have to apply itself to increasing the capacity of its local management team. In addition,
cooperation with old and new partners will have to be developed alongside training and other regular activities.

**Political Changes in Myanmar**

The astonishing rate of reforms in Myanmar following the General Election in 2010 and more so following by-elections in 2012 has ushered in a new sense of expectation and optimism but also opportunism, as many local and international players and business entrepreneurs pour into the country and the media sector. In this new environment it is important for YFS to consolidate its reputation as a training centre whilst also looking at ways of diversifying its activities to meet new demands. For this reason, in 2012 the school pursued a policy of reaching out to different stakeholders in the government (the Ministry of Information, the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise, the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation) but also to international aid agencies and cultural organisations (LIFT, LOI, 3MG Fund, the British Council, the Goethe Institute, the Institut Français) and civil society (the ‘88 Generation’, as well as individual players in the film industry, the Capacity Building Institute, local NGOs), in order to forge new links and pursue common agendas.

**2012 Workshops and Clinics**

In 2012 the Yangon Film School held seven workshops and two clinics for a multiethnic intake of 35 men and women and 26 graduates of previous YFS courses as follows:

a) An Advanced Editing ‘Clinic’ was held throughout June in order for YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen (Finland) to mentor ongoing personal projects by YFS members

b) Basic Training was held for three days from 25 to 27 July and for the first time this year was delivered solely by student trainers Aung Ko Ko and Pe Maung Same (camera) and Myo Min Khin and Kyaw Myo Lwin (sound). The training introduced the new YFS intake to the camera and sound equipment prior to the Beginners’ Workshop proper.

c) This basic training was followed from 28 July to 4 September by The Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop, a four-week residential Beginners’ Workshop taught by international tutors Ulrike Schaz (Germany), Lars Barthel (Germany) and Ivan Horák (Czech Republic) in tandem with YFS student trainers as part of the teach-to-train programme. During the workshop, six men and six women received an introduction to the technical, aesthetic and ethical aspects of the genre and worked in teams of three to produce four final films on the topic of ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People who live in them’.

d) From 30 July to 11 August international sound tutor Ivan Horák (Czech Republic) trained eight male participants and one female observer in the art of Sound Design for both documentary and fiction films.

e) From 15 to 18 August, YFS cinematography tutor Lars Barthel (Germany) held an Advanced Camera Workshop inspired by the topic of old buildings during which experienced YFS cinematographers and talented beginner cinematographers could hone their shooting and lighting skills in various exercises and conditions.

f) From 17 August to 9 September the Editing Mentorship of Beginners’ Films took place at the workshop venue. International tutors Melanie Sandford (Australia) and George Cragg (UK) provided daily support to the four YFS student editors working on the edits of the Beginners’ final film assignments.
The fourth Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop was held from 22 August to 4 September with international screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews (UK) who trained seven women and four men in the art of film writing. This year’s workshop focused on creating short fiction scripts suitable for production in the 2013 True Fictions Workshop.

A four-week Introduction to Editing Workshop was held from 11 September to 6 October led by international editing tutor Melanie Sandford (Australia) and YFS local editing trainer Myo Mhin Khin (Myanmar). The workshop introduced the new intake of Yangon Film School students to this most challenging part of filmmaking.

Ways of Seeing: the History of Film Technique & Style, a two-week course from 8 to 21 October by YFS international tutor Frances Calvert (UK/Australia) taught ‘cineliteracy’ and helped students understand the genres and styles shaping world cinema.

In How Fiction Films Work: an Introduction to Film Analysis, a two-week course from 19 November to 1 December, YFS editing tutor Tuula Mehtonen (Finland) taught emerging filmmakers the ability to distinguish between different editing methods in fiction film and to understand how editing can be used to build a film’s intensity.

A second Advanced Editing ‘Clinic’ was held from 2 December 2012 to 7 January 2013, again mentored by Tuula Mehtonen who oversaw the editing of five films by YFS members.

Alongside this programme of filmmaking workshops, the YFS Management Coach Rusta Mizani (Germany) delivered the following Management Training programme:

Following an initial visit to YFS in Yangon in November and December 2011 to familiarise himself with YFS students and staff in Myanmar, the Coach made a second trip to Yangon from 23 April to 4 May 2012, designed to assist the YFS Committee in their preparations for the recruitment of four new members of staff.

Between 28 May and 8 June the Coach led a Media Management Workshop, a two-week training programme introducing the essential knowledge and skills required to manage a media organisation. The Workshop allowed the YFS Committee - guided by the Coach - to make an in-depth assessment and selection of four candidates as new YFS staff members.

A final visit to YFS in Yangon was made by the Coach from 11 to 23 August to help the new staff integrate and to monitor their progress before the YFS Committee decided whether to prolong their contracts or not.

Other activities in 2012 included:

In February YFS feature length documentary Nargis - when time stopped breathing won the FIPRESCI International Critics’ Award 2012 at the Mumbai International Film Festival. Mentor Ulrike Schaz and YFS filmmaker Pe Maung Same accompanied the film to Mumbai to present it.
2) Between 3 and 7 February four YFS films were screened at the second Lifescapes: Southeast Asian Film Festival in Chiang Mai, Thailand. YFS filmmakers Lay Thida, Maung Okkar and Hnin Ei Hlaing accompanied their films to the festival and participated in presentations and Q&As.

3) In April, YFS filmmaker Sai Kong Kham travelled with his debut film and festival favourite *Sweetie Pie* to Vision du Réel Nyon in Switzerland and the Sehsüchte International Student Film Festival in Potsdam in Germany.

4) YFS filmmaker Hnin Ei Hlaing attended the Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival in Germany in May to present her film *Burmese Butterfly*. YFS filmmaker Lay Thida’s *Unreported Story* screened at the same festival. Lindsey joined Hnin Ei Hlaing to present the work of the film school in a workshop entitled ‘Participatory video: what is it?’

5) Hnin Ei Hlaing accompanied *Burmese Butterfly* to the Frameline International LGBT Film Festival in San Francisco in June. The film screened in the Best Student Film category at the Sheffield International DocFest in the UK in the same month.

6) During the Beginners’ Workshop, veteran filmmaker U Win Pe, who had recently returned home from almost twenty years in exile in the US, visited the students and discussed his work as a filmmaker and correspondent for Radio Free Asia, and now Voice of America.

7) In September a total of seven YFS films screened at the 2nd Wathann Film Festival in Yangon. Aung Nwai Htway’s *Behind the Screen* won Best Documentary and there was a special screening of *Nargis - when time stopped breathing*. This was the film’s premiere in Myanmar and the screening was attended by over 500 people. Following a two-minute silence for the cyclone’s victims there was a lively and moving Q&A.

8) At the end of October YFS filmmaker Shin Daewe travelled to Denmark to present *Nargis - when time stopped breathing* at the Freedom Film Festival in Copenhagen.

9) In December, YFS Director Lindsey Merrison gave a short presentation about YFS training programmes at the MMPE / MMPO-organised seminar ‘Towards a Better Future for Myanmar Movies’ in Yangon and was interviewed for MRTV4.

10) YFS filmmaker Seng Mai attended the ChopShots Documentary Film Festival in Jakarta in December where her film *The Social Game* won Second Best Short Documentary. Lindsey Merrison attended the festival and also a DocNet Strategy Meeting at the Goethe Institute in Jakarta on 10 December 2012.

11) On 16 and 17 February, 2013 an independent evaluation of YFS was conducted by Christine Forrester (UK). During her two-day visit to Yangon, she met and interviewed members of the YFS Committee, YFS management staff, students and alumni as well as YFS clients from the international community and development sectors. Her findings can be found in her attached report.
1. Breakdown of YFS Management Activities & Project Plan

January 2012 - October 2012:

During this period the YFS Director, YFS Project Coordinator and Assistant, Festival Coordinator and Accountant undertook:

- Preparation of financial and narrative reports of 2011 workshops
- Supervision of subtitling and post-production of films made in 2011
- Grant writing and other fundraising activities including:
  - Funding missions, visibility actions such as screenings of YFS work to potential clients, festival organisers, NGOs, donors
  - Creation of YFS website including details of all films and makers
- Pre-workshop organisation including:
  - Devising courses with international tutors
  - Recruitment of participants, tutors and staff
  - Permit application for all Workshops in 2012
  - Coordinating travel arrangements
  - Research and purchase of equipment and teaching materials
- Cash flow and fund management
- Coordination of the YFS Flying Mentorship Programme
- Submitting YFS films to festivals and coordinating YFS students’ participation at international festivals and other events
- Creating individual DVDs and portfolios of students’ work
- Year-round mentoring of individual projects for NGOs as well as individual films by YFS students
- Year-round mentoring of YFS management team and producers in organisational and contractual aspects of running YFS as a media resource
- Establishing contact with broadcasters, production companies, festivals and other organisations to pave the way for co-productions, training programmes and scholarships

24 - 28 March 2012

YFS Director Lindsey Merrison travels to Bangkok/Salaya to attend the SEA DocNet Seminar ‘Finding Neverland for Documentary’ and gives a short presentation about YFS at the EU Delegation offices in Bangkok

29 March - 4 April 2012

Lindsey travels to Yangon to:
- meet the YFS Committee and work on the draft MoU with Committee and management coach
- welcome Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh and French Ambassador M. Mathou to YFS
- meet other Myanmar media players Zarganar (from HOME) and Khin Maung Saw and Khin Maung Win (from Democratic Voice of Burma)
- meet YFS alumnus Kyi Phyu Shin and activist Min Ko Naing to discuss a short film workshop for ex-political prisoners of the ‘88 generation’

24 April - 4 May 2012

Management Training Coach Rusta Mizani travels to Yangon to help the YFS Committee shortlist six candidates for the management workshop and also develop the MoU between YFS Yangon and YFS Berlin
Management Training Coach Rusta Mizani travels to Yangon to hold a media Management Workshop to identify four new YFS management team members from candidates.

YFS director Lindsey Merrison travels to Yangon to:
• Join YFS Committee members in interviewing candidates for the Beginners’, Sound Design and Screenwriting workshops scheduled for 2012
• Finalise with the YFS Committee the MoU between the YFS Committee/YFS Yangon and YFS Berlin and follow the management recruitment process
• Attend the Yangon Heritage Trust conference, identify buildings and meet stakeholders (French Ambassador M. Mathou, U Ye Htut/Mol, Thant Myint-Oo) who can help YFS identify, secure and fund a permanent school building

YFS director Lindsey Merrison travels to Yangon to:
• Accompany 2012 Beginners’ Workshop and attend Wathann Film Festival
• Meet with NGO clients to discuss progress of commissioned projects
• View workshop venues and bldgs.; meet stakeholders regarding a permanent bldg.
• Conduct meetings with YFS Committee to discuss handover plan, current management issues, job descriptions, structure of school vs. production company, crewing of NGO films, progress of YFS Production Fund projects, ratification of school guidelines, upcoming Committee election

Preparation in Berlin and Yangon of Winter Workshops (Introduction to Editing, Film History, Film Analysis and Advanced Film Clinic)

YFS Director Lindsey Merrison travels to Yangon to:
• Meet with EU, LIFT, LOI, British Council to discuss Travelling Cinema Project etc.
• Meet with client Carine Weiss to discuss producing a film on maternal health
• Meet new Myanmar Information Minister U Aung Gyi and present YFS at conference: ‘Towards a Better Future for Myanmar Movies’
• Accompany and organize the YFS Annual Screening 2012
• Locate alternative workshop venues and a permanent building; meet stakeholders.

8 - 11 December 2012

YFS Director Lindsey Merrison travels to Jakarta to attend the ChopShots SEA Documentary Film festival and a DocNet strategy meeting

December 2012 - May 2013:

Supervision of online edits and post-production of eleven films produced in 2012 (including fine cutting, subtitling, colour correction, rights clearance, credits in Burmese and English, sound mix, edit of Workshop film, production of individual DVDs for clients, Workshop DVD collection and single DVDs of certain films, cover design, inlay text; preparation of eight financial and narrative reports and four audits
2. Fundraising

The final budget for 2012 was 420,000 EUR. Funding of approximately 100,000 EUR was received from the EU (the second and final year of a two-year grant) and also the Swedish International Development Agency (the second year of a three-year grant). Contributions amounting to between 10,000 and 34,000 EUR came from the Finnish Association for Media and Development (VIKES), Goethe Institute Jakarta, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Heinrich Boell Foundation, and smaller contributions (less than 10,000 EUR) were made by the Norwegian Burma Committee and the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A new donor, Open Society Foundation, contributed 20,000 EUR towards local Trainers and Management Training.

(i) Comments

The film school suffered from underfunding of approximately 20% in 2012. This necessitated careful husbandry in order to complete all the planned activities. In particular, the rental period of the main workshop venue had to be reduced from six months to three, and courses had to be held in parallel and back-to-back from July to December. Although this enabled the new recruits to pass seamlessly from one course to the next, it also required a great deal of stamina, and the students’ energy was understandably flagging by the end of the year. Also, several members of the new intake were obliged to return to their ‘day jobs’ in order to earn a livelihood, and could no longer take part in the film analysis course in November. A post-production course scheduled for January 2013 was cancelled for similar reasons.

(ii) Workshop Venue, School Building

Current changes in Myanmar, in particular the selling-off of government properties to business associates close to the government, as well as the influx of an increasing number of international development workers and aid agencies, have led to soaring property prices. This has affected rental prices in Yangon, which have sometimes risen by as much as 100%. In 2012, YFS trainings were split between the Ruby Hotel at 23 Bawga Road, Nine Mile Pyay Road and the YFS house (see left) at 51E U Po Tet Road, Mayangone Tsp. Since the Ruby Hotel will not be available for workshops in 2013, another interim venue must be found. However, rising hotel prices will make this a difficult task. In order to successfully handover the Project, it remains essential that a permanent base for the school be found and funded. YFS’ presence at the MMPE/MMPO-organised conference ‘Towards a Better Future for Myanmar Movies’ in December 2012 afforded an opportunity to pitch the value of the school to the Minister of Information as a centre of capacity building and hub of a vibrant cultural industry. It is hoped that MoI will support the school’s bid to secure a building (possibly a heritage one) for its activities. In 2013 YFS must continue to utilise the momentum of current changes in order to make this vision a reality.

3. Schedule, Methodology and Tutors

Since budgetary constraints in 2012 obliged us to curtail our rental of the workshop venue (Ruby Hotel) from the scheduled six months to three, we had to hold the Beginners documentary course The Art of Documentary Filmmaking, Advanced Camera Course and editing of Beginners’ films, and then Introduction to Editing and Film History courses back-to-back in a three-month stretch. This had its advantages in that students were able to benefit from an intense, continuous and productive semester of learning, but it also meant that they were obliged to give up their day jobs for a much longer period than was economically viable for most. We held the Screenwriting, Sound Design and Film Analysis courses in our YFS House at U Po Tet Road. The final planned course of the year on post-production had to be dropped since there were not sufficient students available to attend it (several members of the 2012 intake came from other parts
of Myanmar and had to return to their homes and livelihoods). However, there were two Advanced Editing 'Clinics' held in June and December/January. In addition, the two-week Sound Design workshop — which had been absorbed into the post-production course in 2011 — was reinstated as a separate course and held alongside the Art of Documentary Filmmaking workshop. This meant that the total number of courses offered in 2012 was not reduced.

As ever, the workshops were taught via a mixture of classroom teaching, practical exercises, screenings, feedback sessions and individual mentorship, culminating in several short exercises and documentary films as well as longer works-in-progress.

Basic Training was led by Student Trainers Aung Ko Ko, Pe Maung Same, Myo Min Khin and Kyaw Myo Lwin. The Beginners’ Workshop: The Art of Documentary Filmmaking was led by Ulrike Schaz (Germany) with support from cinematography tutor Lars Barthel (Germany), sound tutor Ivan Horák (Czech Republic), editors Melanie Sandford (Australia) and George Cragg (UK). Lars also trained cinematographers in the Advanced Camera Workshop, and Ivan sound students in the Sound Design course. The Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop was taught by British screenwriter and filmmaker Rachel Mathews; the Ways of Seeing: Film History Course by Australian filmmaker and lecturer Frances Calvert. The Introduction to Editing workshop was led by international editing tutor Melanie Sandford (Australia) assisted by local editing trainers Myo Myin Khin and Hnin Eh Haing. Tuula Mehtonen (Finland) mentored the two Advanced Editing ‘Clinics’ and also taught the How Fiction Films Work: Film Analysis course with support from local writer and filmmaker Aung Min. For the first time this year the workshops were organised locally by Workshop Supervisor Hnin Eh Haing supported by Win Naing Khir, and — until they left at end of September — by other newly recruited management staff Khang Sape Zaw, Alison Nyunt and Myo Hein Tun. Their work was overseen from a distance by YFS Project Assistant Tina Walinda in the YFS Berlin office. YFS students received feedback and production advice on all projects as well as ongoing tuition in subtitling from YFS Director Lindsey Merrison.

(i) Comments

Attendance in courses running over periods lasting more than two months has become an issue for some students. In future, the school should consider some form of study grant to enable low-income students in particular to reap the benefits of continuous semesters of training, as is usual at film schools.

4. Permits, Participants and Implementation

Although censorship in print media has been relaxed to a certain extent, constraints for film and audio-visual media workers still abound. In spite of a workshop permit granted to YFS for 2012 by the Ministry of Information, workshop participants had difficulty filming at several chosen locations and, in the case of the Secretariat building, permission was not granted to film there by the building’s new leaseholders (A Naw War Art Group). While more experienced students familiar with filming in Yangon were unperturbed by the presence of police and other ‘gatekeepers’ at some of the downtown locations, novice filmmakers, particularly those from outside Yangon, often felt intimidated and preferred not to film in public places. However, when more experienced Student Trainers accompanied inexperienced filmmakers to locations, these mentors were often able to defuse potentially difficult situations.

The Minister of Information U Aung Gyi has indicated that YFS may no longer need to apply for permission to conduct its workshops but will instead be asked merely to inform the Ministry of its upcoming activities. The Ministry of Information is currently being advised by UNESCO on the development of a Media Law. A ‘Media Development Thematic Working Group’ of which, as of April 2013, YFS is now a member, is also playing an advisory role. More than ever, it must be YFS’ goal to lobby for freedom of expression and engage the MoI and mainstream filmmakers within the MMPO to endorse and support the establishment of YFS as a permanent school in its own building.
(i) Participants

The new intake of beginner-filmmakers on the Art of Documentary Filmmaking course was gender balanced with six men and six women aged between 21 and 34 years of age. These participants hailed from a variety of locations - from Taunggyi in the north to Bogale in the Delta and Thanbyuzayat in the south - as well as diverse social, ethnic and religious backgrounds including Myanmar, Shan, Kayin-Armenian, Pa-O, Lisu and Mon; Buddhist and Christian. They included photographers, videographers, journalists and writers, an audio technician working in radio, as well as members of local civil society and international aid organisations.

There was an additional intake of 7 women and 4 men on the Screenwriting course, and 8 new male recruits, including Myanmar, Shan and Chin, and one Shan-Kachin female observer, a graduate of previous YFS courses, on the 2012 Sound Design course. There were a further two new recruits (one man, one woman) on the Film Analysis course, bringing the total intake of new recruits to YFS to 35 for 2012, half of whom hailed from locations outside Yangon.

A total of 26 graduates of previous YFS courses returned to take part in advanced courses and/or participate in the YFS teach-to-train programme (9 people), thus making a total of 61 people who received training during YFS workshops in 2012. There were a total of 13 different ethnicities (including, apart from Bamar: Lahu, Pa-O, Lisu, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Mon, Sino-Burmese and Shan) and three religions (Buddhist, Christian and Muslim) in training in 2012. A total of 25 women and 36 men took part in YFS workshops and modules in 2012.

(ii) Networks and advertising

In addition to YFS’ own strong informal networks, in 2012, YFS also advertised its courses, vacancies and other activities in print and/or broadcast media and on the internet. Several candidates applied for courses via the school’s website and there are currently around 700 followers of our Facebook posts. YFS is a member of SEA DocNet and regularly takes part in trainings and strategy meetings designed to strengthen documentary film production in the region.

5. Training of Trainers

The teach-to-train programme continues to go from strength to strength. In 2012, YFS student trainers Aung Ko Ko and Pe Maung Same (camera) and Myo Min Khin and Kyaw Myo Lwin (sound) were solely responsible for
delivering the three-day Basic Training course to prepare students for the Beginners’ Workshop. Lay Thida, Shin Daewe, Pe Maung Same and Thi Ha were appointed as mentors for the first and final film exercises during the Beginners’ Workshop which enabled trainers to go out on location and integrate a practical, hands-on approach into their teaching. In addition, YFS editors Kyaw Myo Lwin, Zaw Win Htwe, Khin Myanmar and Thet Su Hlaing edited the first exercises and final films from the workshop. Student trainers were again paid per session. This pay scale will increase over time.

In 2012 YFS student trainers also held trainings outside YFS, at Zarganar’s House of Media Entertainment (HOME); they also trained ex-political prisoners of the ’88 Generation’ and transferred their knowledge in private study groups. YFS trainers are now also in demand by other media players such as facilitators on courses including the BBC’s media training of MRTV at the national broadcast centre at Thatkon. YFS films are already being used by NGOs, CBOs and other training courses such as those currently held in journalism by International Media Support (IMS).

"We use (YFS) videos to show examples of storytelling about subjects that are around us. This is then followed up by discussions. Some participants were really moved by videos such as Empty Nest, The Dream and The Bamboo Grove. Thanks to YFS we have these good stories to share with the trainees."

Binod Hattarai, Trainer, International Media Support

Cinematographer Mya Darli Aung and actor Kyaw Thiha on the shoot of The Bamboo Grove

(i) Comments

The teach-to-train programme is a central aspect of YFS’ transition to a local-run entity. Involving more experienced YFS students as trainers helps them consolidate their own knowledge and identify with YFS; it also affords trainers respect and confidence as they transfer real skills to their peers, in their own language. By conducting trainings for other groups and organisations, YFS trainers are contributing to exchange and participation and to raising technical, artistic and ethical standards throughout the media sector and civil society.

II YFS Management Training

A 10-month mentorship of Yangon Film School Management conducted from November 2011 to August 2012

Report by YFS Management Coach Rusta Mizani

1. First Visit to YFS Yangon by Management Coach
   November and December 2011

My first trip to YFS in Yangon in November/December 2011 enabled me to familiarize myself with YFS staff and students in Yangon. An introductory session was held with the YFS Committee to discuss the proposed process of transition from international to local management of the School and set dates for the Media Management Workshop in May 2012.

The recruitment process for new management staff had just begun through the placing of adverts in key local media and on the YFS website. An information leaflet was designed for distribution to potential candidates in YFS’ own student network and local NGOs. In order to objectify the recruitment process, the
YFS Committee and I developed assessment guidelines for interviews with management position applicants. A local volunteer was found to handle incoming applications, liaise with applicants and schedule interviews.

Meetings with the current YFS management helped me understand the current division of tasks among local and international management/administrative staff and the School’s future requirements. A target-structure for YFS organisation during and after the transition process was developed. In cooperation with YFS Management, I was able to refine the structure of the transition process, bringing down anticipated costs for the transition programme by approximately 40%. The new structure proposed an alternate on-site and tele-support framework based on a succession of milestones on the way to full transition. This would ensure the new management staff stepped into positions of responsibility right from the start whilst also being supported by a reliable and tailor-made coaching framework.

I also met several of YFS’ donors and learned about their requirements for support of the School. This was useful in order to understand the socio-political transformation currently taking place in Myanmar and the opportunities it presents to YFS. I shadowed the YFS Director and Project Assistant in project acquisition and day-to-day activities. YFS’ 2011 Annual Screening was a valuable opportunity to liaise with local industry professionals and YFS supporters. Meetings were held with local training facilities, media companies and NGOs; YFS also explored opportunities for cooperation with local broadcasting group MRTV4, community health promoter PSI, and well-known Myanmar actor and activist Zarganar.

2. On-Site Workshop in the Management Transition Process
23 April - 4 May 2012

Following on from the needs assessment, this two-week Workshop focussed on working with the existing YFS Committee to initiate the transition process. The Committee and I addressed strategy, transparency and decision-making competence in the recruitment of additional management staff and ensuing transition process. I also sought to build trust between the Committee and myself and help establish a common vision for YFS.

There was some resistance to organisational change among Committee members which seemed to be rooted in diffuse fears of an unknown future. Easing these fears and turning resistance into cooperation was one of the main objectives of the session.

YFS Committee members were concerned that:
- intake of new and inexperienced staff might lead to ‘brain drain’ if new staff decided to migrate after management training
- new staff would probably lack filmmaking experience
- falsely interpreted management roles would lead to rifts with YFS filmmakers
- it would have no say in strategic questions during and after the handover
- recruitment and guidance of new management would be controlled by Berlin-based management thus ‘sidelining’ Committee’s competence as the elected representative body of YFS

An interim solution was to fill positions of Head of School and Head of Production by current female Committee members (a joint effort by two female YFS members for the Head of School position and the current Project Director as Head of Production) and recruit three additional new staff members. Thus recruits would grow from assistant/deputy positions and develop a hands-on understanding of the management of film projects. This approach seemed best suited to building trust amongst Committee members for a controlled transition.
After agreeing on an infrastructure, the Committee helped develop job descriptions based on division of tasks. It was decided that the relationship between Berlin-based management and the Committee should be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which would include a roadmap for the gradual transfer of privileges and responsibilities and a reporting system that established accountability of the future management team to the Committee. The MoU was developed during the Workshop, elaborated upon during the next visit, and completed before new staff was hired.

The Committee then held interviews with applicants for the vacant management positions. Short-listed candidates were interviewed according to an assessment sheet which was used to record skills, relevant experience and overall suitability of interviewees. Following the interviews, invitations to a two-week Media Management Workshop in May were extended to six out of the twelve short-listed candidates. At the end of the workshop four new staff members would be selected to begin work.

3. Media Management Workshop
28 May - 8 June 2012

(i) Rationale for the Workshop

The Media Management Workshop served two purposes. Firstly, it introduced specific skills needed to fulfill management duties within a media organisation. Through lessons, case studies, discussions and practical exercises the participants acquired hands-on management tools and developed their soft skills. Secondly, the Workshop allowed for in-depth assessment and selection of the most suitable candidates to be taken on as YFS Staff. By observing students’ interaction, personality and general performance on the course, the YFS Committee was able to make more informed recruitment decisions.

(ii) Methodology

The workshop ran from Monday to Friday for two weeks for approximately six hours per day with an additional communal daily lunch and social activities (two evening dinners shared with members of the YFS Committee as well as a cinema visit).

The first week began with a short introduction exercise to familiarise participants with each other. It was followed by a screening of *Lost in La Mancha*, a documentary about the disastrous course of events during Terry Gilliam’s attempt to produce his version of Don Quixote. This involuntarily tragicomic account served as a memorable case study throughout the workshop. The majority of participants had no prior experience or practical insight into the filmmaking process and it was important to put ‘management’ into the context of a media environment. Short screenings were conducted daily in order to familiarise participants with YFS film output, its vision and successes, and with the students behind the productions.

One challenge lay in the participants’ difficulty in ‘activating’ their theoretical knowledge and conceptual notions of issues covered in the workshop. Initially, they also lacked self-confidence in expressing opinions, speaking in front of the class or in English. Since Myanmar’s educational system favours a non-participatory teaching style, students are not accustomed to active engagement and to immediately putting into practice theoretical knowledge. For this reason the Workshop placed an emphasis on practical exercises and discussions in an open yet protected environment. Rather than following a rigid chronology, Workshop participants were encouraged to explore challenges as they arose. Exercises focussed on team- and trust-building as well as improvement of soft skills.

Participants developed apace even within the short time span of the Workshop. This aided a more in-depth assessment of participants for recruitment purposes than was possible during interview-based assessment. The course resulted in an intake of four new local staff members for YFS Management. All four displayed exceptional dedication during the recruitment process and possessed a skill base strong enough to expect a successful transition.
(iii) Topics Covered

- Stakeholders in the film industry
- The Film Production Process
- Introduction to YFS: vision/mission, organizational structure, curriculum and tutors, productions
- Teamwork and team management
- Managing creative processes
- Managers and the transformation process
- Leadership vs. Management
- Basic concepts of human interaction in the workplace (Maslow, Johari Window, ‘Psychological Contract’)
- Business communication (body language, cross-cultural differences)
- Basic legal concepts: contracts, legal bodies, intellectual property, chain of rights, insurance
- Project management
- Problem analysis (‘Drill Down’ and ‘5 Whys’)
- Formulating goals, risk identification and mitigation
- Scheduling
- Effective meetings, Brainstorming and Mind-mapping
- Managing Finances: budgeting, sources of finance in the film industry and for YFS, public donors and funds, common mistakes in funding applications, cash flow, financial controlling, revenue stream in the film industry
- Soft Skills (examples as addressed in exercises): time management, creative problem solving, stress resistance, trust building, multi-tasking

4. Final Visit by Management Coach and Overall Results
   11 - 23 August 2012

I visited Yangon for a third time in August 2012. The visit was intended as a follow-up to the Media Management Workshop in May/June and subsequent recruitment of four new staff members for YFS. By August the new staff had had the opportunity to settle into their jobs and contribute to the preparation of the 2012 Beginners’ Workshop and other activities in the training of the new cohort of students. Initial employment contracts included a three months’ probation clause, which called for review and feedback on progress before prolongation.

(i) Objectives of the visit

- assess the management team’s progress in their assumed jobs
- review individual job profiles, their interconnections and make necessary adjustments
- assist in individual job-related questions
- help team building among new staff members
- aid integration of new recruits into the organisation
- possible prolongation/discontinuation of employment contracts and contract conditions
(ii) Challenges

Although the new staff members had quickly settled into their various duties, individual interviews with staff members revealed the following conflicts:

- Hierarchical conflicts, clash of areas of competence
- Religious differences and an undercurrent of racism
- General conduct (poor attendance records, diligence issues)
- Aversion to ‘new’ management on part of ‘older’ students

All of these issues were addressed in a number of individual and group discussions designed to bring differences into the open in a confidential environment and assist conflict resolution. However, despite concerted efforts to make the situation work, three staff members handed in their notice at the end of the probation period, anticipating a decision by the YFS Student Committee and YFS Director to relieve two new staff of their jobs. A third recruit cited personal reasons for his decision to leave.

The fourth recruit, who is Myanmar-Muslim, was successfully integrated into the YFS management team which, at the time of writing (April 2013) now includes two members of YFS and two non-YFS members.

(iii) Conclusions and Recommendations

Development of personnel recruited from external sources did not prove fully successful. The Committee cited the new staff’s unwillingness to identify themselves fully with YFS’ mission and their alleged lack of respect for filmmakers’ needs and experience as the reasons.

I must admit that, although I anticipated difficulties, I was not prepared for the considerable challenge of introducing new management to YFS as an existing organisation. The elaborate recruitment process, training and sensitisation of the student body and Committee to management could not overcome the organisation’s innately protectionist stance after having had to shield itself for years in an environment in Myanmar hostile to independent media.

New Committee, New Management

A new YFS Committee was elected into office on 29 September 2012. This Committee has returned to a solution that had already been favoured during the recruitment phase but suspended due to a lack of interest from suitable candidates, namely, to integrate a YFS alumnus or Committee member into the management team. In November, the Committee and YFS Director called for applicants from the student body for the position of Trainee School Manager; this position was successfully filled by YFS member Thet Oo Maung in January 2013. The Committee and YFS Director also decided to reconfigure the management team and, as of 2013, the Trainee Head of Production is now known as Trainee Production Manager. In addition, the position of Administrative Assistant/Cashier (filled by a Myanmar-Muslim) is now known as Administrator & Cashier and includes additional duties.

Lessons Learned

Instead of an external coach, the YFS Committee has decided to let future transition follow a more organic and less formal process of learning-on-the-job under the supervision of the YFS Director during her presence in Yangon. The team will henceforth be developed in close consultation with the YFS Director. This new constellation has engaged YFS in a more organic and so far promising path of ownership transfer; its success, however, depends more than ever on local YFS staff’s initiative and commitment to future challenges. YFS members need to develop a better understanding and ‘emotional’ acceptance of the need for change and professionalization in order to face a more competitive media landscape in Myanmar. YFS’ current grant-dependent status must give way to strengthening of local management capacity in order to secure sustainability.
III Advanced Editing Clinic I

A four week mentorship held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 1 June to 8 July 2012

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen

1. Rationale and Methodology

I flew to Yangon in June to mentor some personal projects by YFS members. The idea was to mentor students during their editing processes and see how well and independently these students are now able to edit. I was contracted to work for two weeks spread throughout the month of June and early July. During this time I went to the YFS house every day because I found that my presence was a boon to the students.

2. Participants

Although five students confirmed in advance that they intended to edit their projects during June in reality I worked with only three: Aung Nwai Htway (Ko Nwai) on Behind the Screen, his YFS Production Funded documentary about his parents, famous Burmese film stars in the 1960s and 1970s, whose marriage broke down irrevocably when Ko Nwai was a child; Shin Daewe on The Collector, her documentary about Burma’s political process from the 1988 uprising onwards, seen through her own eyes as a politically active teenager and young woman growing up in Yangon; and Khin Myanmar who wanted to work on material filmed at a blind school by YFS students in 2010 as part of the Poetic Documentary Workshop.

3. Individual Mentoring of Projects

The Blind School

Beginner-editor Khin Myanmar created a rough cut alone. Her idea was to first introduce the mysterious world of the blind children touching everything and then beginning to show that they have the same ups and downs as us all. Her first version was quite soft and sentimental and it was initially a challenge for her to use more edgy material, but she understood quickly that sensitivity is created via contrast and beauty quickly becomes boring without something painful alongside it. Despite initial fears of making mistakes, she quickly learned to rely on the process itself and relaxed. Since she did not seem to have problems editing, we were able to concentrate on the structure and emotional flow of the film. She invented a good method of analysing her own work: she first wrote down her intention for every scene and then evaluated whether the scene was working or not as she had planned. Very soon she began to see what was not working and started making her own suggestions to improve the storyline.

Khin Myanmar took around 15 days to edit the current version of the film. It was gratifying to see how she began to gain confidence in herself given enough time and lack of pressure. She was sensitive but disciplined and had a good sense of structure. When I left I asked her to go through all the material one more time to check she had not overlooked any unused ‘gems’. Local YFS editing mentor Myo Min Khin helped her technically and also promised to compose some guitar music to accompany her edit.

The Blind School footage could also serve as good exercise material for any other Beginner-editors who want to develop their skills further.

Behind the Screen

In the beginning I was a little disappointed with Ko Nwai’s progress on the ‘international’ version of his film: I had sent him many pages of suggestions after leaving the project with him in December 2011 but he had not undertaken much further work upon it - no doubt due to his day-job as an editor for an NGO. It was also a big challenge for him to unpick his ‘Burmese’ version, which was already in itself beautifully edited, but he agreed that international audiences would expect to learn more about his parents’ relationship than he...
was willing to divulge in Myanmar - out of respect for his father. In his scant free time in the evenings and on Sundays, Ko Nwai worked very hard. Although he had a tendency to leave out interesting pieces of conversation if he did not have a corresponding picture, he soon learned that that images do not need to say the same thing as conversation or voice-over. When he realised that the initially clumsy new sequences were beginning to look like a film again he had a spurt of energy and began to make his own suggestions. These were interesting and good and new images emerged every week. Towards the end of the Clinic, Ko Nwai was able to take two days off from the NGO so we could work on the film together for three successive days. He began to think about re-recording some parts of the conversation because the tone was not right. We managed to create his first cut of the entire film, but this was not yet the complete version.

The Collector
Shin Daewe wrote her voiceover for The Collector at the YFS house. When she was ready she would come downstairs and ‘read’ or actually recount what had happened to her from 1988 onwards - including being arrested twice as a political prisoner. Her story was vivid and touching. We then went through the text focusing on the most interesting things and shortened it. Shin Daewe then recorded the voiceover at home and wrote the subtitles.

When I finally heard the voiceover, however, it contained none of the emotion Shin Daewe had shown whilst telling the story. For instance, she had left out the part about how a young student was stabbed to death in front of her eyes during the 1988 demonstrations when she was only 15, because, she said ‘she did not have an image for it’. I went through the same discussion I had had with Ko Nwai about how the voiceover can be connected to a film’s images and sound in many different ways. Shin Daewe had all the information but she did not know how to tell the story. From this point on we worked only on the voiceover in order to find a structure for the film.

Shin Daewe ideally needs to work with an editor but that is currently unrealistic. She is determined to edit at least the rough cut herself but first she needs to know what story she wants to tell. As a mentor, I do not want to push people because I believe that students should take responsibility for their own films. However, there is additional pressure with Shin Daewe’s project because soon there will be many other films on the same subject in Burma. It is a question of timing: if she postpones the editing now she will discover someone else has already made her film.

3. Recommendations
YFS has a general issue about what do with delayed film projects. It is much easier to keep on shooting new material, but it is very difficult for students to find the time required to edit their projects. Of course some students are eager to finish their films, but most YFS students have to work elsewhere to earn a living. Postponing the editing process makes it harder and harder to complete later. There is some wonderful footage in the Blind School material, Kyaw Myo Lwin’s Tyres project and also the long-gestating Yangon by Night. Perhaps YFS needs to think about how it can finance editors to enable them to edit personal projects like this so the students do not always have to fit the editing around their day jobs.
IV The Art of Documentary Filmmaking Beginners’ Workshop

A four-week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 25 July to 4 September 2012

Report by Workshop Leader and YFS tutor for Directing and Cinematography Ulrike Schaz

1. Participants from Far and Wide

Ulrike Schaz: we were pleased that this year some of the 12 workshop participants had found out about YFS via the YFS website. Others decided to apply after seeing YFS films in urban centres outside Yangon, such as Mandalay. Many participants hailed from different parts of the country: two came from Taunggyi in Shan State, two from Mandalay, one from Mon State, one from Bogale in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, and six from Yangon. This year, five of the students were absolute beginners and seven had some media experience: Sandar Linn works in the communications department of the Yangon office of the United Nations Children Fund; Thet Oo Maung is a freelance photographer and Shunn Lei Swe Yee, who has an MA from a US college, has experience as a journalist. Sai Nyi Nyi works as a video editor for the government body Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise; Soe Moe Aung, who applied for the Beginners’ Workshop unsuccessfully in 2011, attended a film course in New Delhi before reapplying and being selected by YFS in 2012; Zin Mar Oo works in a photo studio in Mandalay and has some experience in photography (in her recruitment interview she argued there should be more women involved in cinematography in Myanmar). David Kyaw Thet Aung, a Christian from rural Mogok north of Mandalay, works for a Baptist Church which is keen for its members to be trained in documentary filmmaking; Han Lin Twin studied English at Taunggyi University and has experience in desktop publishing and editing; Cho Phyone is an art student in Yangon with some experience in photography; Lin Hnin Aye - the youngest in the group - had done some training at MRTV and written some articles on children’s education; Soe Kyaw Tin Htun is a freelance photographer who works a photo journalist, and Nu Nu Hlaing has a BA in Mass Communications from Dagon University and a real passion to make documentaries.

The students from Yangon helped the students from rural areas during the workshop. I saw them growing in self-confidence and I really love that. I want YFS to ensure that future workshops have a similar mix of students from Yangon and the countryside so that friendships and exchanges can flourish between students from different places. 

Hnin Ei Hlaing, YFS editor and Workshop Manager
I come from a rural area so being in Yangon itself is a change for me. Everything is new. I've handled new equipment and learnt new technology. It's been a great opportunity.

Han Lin Twin, 2012 Beginner from Taunggyi

2. The First Three Days - Basic Technical Training

The 2012 Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop was the first Beginners' Workshop to be organised around an HD workflow. Students were taught to handle the new Sony HD HXR-NX 5 Handycams as well as HD cards as part of a technical workflow. All were impressed by the quality of our HD cameras.

This year, our ‘teach-to-train’ programme entered a new phase whereby, for the first time, student trainers were fully responsible for basic technical training. Although I was present as an observer, I did not influence the trainers and restricted my input to discussing their teaching approach.

During the first three days, student trainers Aung Ko Ko and Pe Maung Same (camera), Myo Min Khin and Kyaw Myo Lwin (sound) introduced the beginners to the equipment and helped them familiarise themselves with their tools. Camera trainers initially asked students to use the tripod at all times, and only later introduced them to working with a handheld camera. The training included a talk about the aesthetics of filmmaking by YFS cinematographer Aung Ko Ko entitled ‘painting with light’. On the third day, students were given their first exercise in which they had to tell a story in five takes.

I’d never touched a video camera before this workshop ... The training by local mentors like Pe Maung Same and Aung Ko Ko was really helpful. We would have struggled without it.

Soe Kyaw Tin Htun, 2012 Beginner

The Basic Training was excellent. They taught us the essentials ... and explained how to do everything the right way. The local trainers weren’t show-offs or know-it-alls. They guided us and shared their knowledge. We asked lots of questions and they explained things well. It was really helpful.

Soe Moe Aung, 2012 Beginner

(i) Comment: language barriers

Some students had very little English so communication with international tutors was sometimes difficult. However, those students who spoke good English were soon acting as translators. In particular, beginner students Soe Moe Aung, Thet Oo Maung and Shunn Lei used their language skills to help their peers communicate during workshop discussions.

The Basic Training was great, especially being taught in our own language.

Sai Nyi Nyi, 2012 Beginner
3. Week One - The First Exercise

During the first week, student trainers Lay Thida, Shin Daewe, Pe Maung Same and Thi Ha gave presentations for participants on the following topics: What is Documentary?, Ways of Seeing, The Filmed Conversation and How to Identify a Protagonist. All four trainers also worked as mentors on each of the Beginners’ exercises and the final films. As workshop leader, I integrated student trainers into the teaching process and met them at the end of each day to discuss the day’s teaching. When the workshop proper began on 29th July, international tutors Lars Barthel (camera) and Ivan Horák (sound) joined these sessions. As usual, teaching consisted of a mix of practical training, classroom teaching, film exercises, screenings and discussions. This year we made a point of introducing the Beginners to a wide range of filmmaking and also emphasised the importance of sound; students were also encouraged to try to go beyond conventional narrative in order to tell their stories.

Many people in Myanmar don’t understand the difference between journalism and documentary. I didn’t myself. YFS screened films which have made me realise what documentaries can be.

Soe Moe Aung, 2012 Beginner

As with every Beginners’ Workshop, the Latvian documentary portrait The Egg Lady was once again screened on the first evening prior to the workshop. On day one student trainer Aung Ko Ko screened the film again to the group and provided a shot-by-shot analysis of the camerawork, framing and composition. Student trainer Lay Thida described the filmmaker’s approach in terms of content, ethics and form and explained that documentary filmmakers seek to find underlying truths rather than expose an audience to propaganda. Student editors Thet Su Hlaing, Khin Myanmar, Kyaw Myo Lwin and Zaw Win Htwe contributed their opinions on the film’s editing style. During the evening, Werner Penzel’s and Nicolas Humpert’s visually impressive black-and-white cine poème Middle of the Moment was screened in order to expose the students to the breadth and power of the documentary genre. On the second day of the workshop, I described this film as an example of a premeditated documentary and drew the whole group into a discussion about how the film was made, taking a look at the filmmakers’ motivation, the film’s central tenet, the locations, filming schedule and crew. Students were encouraged to voice their opinions about the film’s structure and impact. This kind of documentary film was completely new for the Beginners; they listened attentively as we discussed how the filmmakers had managed to underpin their film with a certain philosophical approach to time and timelessness, exemplified by the idea of living in the ‘middle of the moment’.

Following this analysis session, students were introduced by student trainer Lay Thida to another YFS staple known as The Cherry Exercise: student trainers and international tutors prepared and lit a room at the hotel’s workshop venue and asked an actor, Cherry Lwin, to perform certain actions. The Beginners, who have no prior knowledge of what awaits them in the room, were divided into two-person camera-and-sound crews and asked to film spontaneously whatever they encountered.

Day three: Filmed Conversations. Student trainers Shin Daewe and Lay Thida introduced the Beginner students to the chocolate game. In this exercise, beginners, trainers and tutors come together for an informal session during which everyone shares an experience with the rest of the group. During this class, the student trainers also demonstrated interview technique; they also made other suggestions about how to work with protagonists in documentary. Aung Ko Ko, Pe Maung Same, Myo Min Khin and Kyaw Myo Lwin demonstrated the technical and aesthetic aspects of filming a conversation, such as the position of the camera and sound boom. Students then formed teams of four in order to interview each other on camera.
On Day four the beginner students were asked to venture outside the workshop venue to film, in crews of three, a short documentary of about five minutes in length. With student mentors on hand to advise them, crews were asked to quickly find locations and protagonists. I encouraged the students to use as little dialogue as possible in these short films and to find other ways of expressing something about their protagonist. This approach involved paying careful attention to the atmosphere at the location, their protagonist’s interaction with other people, as well as their movements and the sounds around them. I also reminded them of the wide range of film grammar at their disposal. The material that emerged from this first short film demonstrated that students had succeeded in capturing some interesting places and protagonists: their footage covered observations of Full Moon Day at the Shwedagon Pagoda (Monsoon Prayers), a crab-processing factory near the Ruby Hotel (The Business), a painter at work in his studio (Painting), and a monk in a monastery (A Wing and a Prayer).

Day 5 and 6: material filmed by the beginners was given to student editors who assembled the rushes, cut sequences and discussed the need for pick ups with crews, mentors and tutors. Beginner-directors transcribed filmed conversations and translators were appointed to translate these from Burmese into English.

The first week of the workshop also included a variety of film screenings designed to inspire the novice filmmakers. Beginners particularly enjoyed watching documentaries made by YFS students; these included Sweetie Pie, Koran and Karate, Again and Again, A Million Threads and Thursday’s Child. Among the other documentaries screened was Un Sogno Brillante (A Glitter Dream). Screenings were followed by discussions during which beginners were encouraged to comment on the cinematic grammar used in the individual films.

Everyone was eager to see the work that had emerged from the Beginners’ first attempts to film. All the teams had done their utmost to avoid structuring their films around a conversation. Monsoon Prayers is purely observational and contains no conversation; The Business contains two short conversations but otherwise concentrates on the workers’ movements and actions. Team 1 made several attempts to find a suitable protagonist: having first tried and failed to film in a pagoda, they then tried to film in a taxi, but when this didn’t work out they decided to focus on a monk. In the end they found themselves at a monastery where they created a quiet portrait of a monk within his surroundings in A Wing and a Prayer. Director Zin Mar Oo wanted to juxtapose the purity of this monk’s existence with the many items that surround him in his flat, including a menagerie of cats, dogs and crows. Her finished exercise nicely conveys the contradiction between Buddhism’s precept of detachment and the materiality of the monk’s personal belongings. Director Soe Kyaw’s interview material with his painter-protagonist engendered a discussion about how to use the conversation without destroying the film’s sensitive non-verbal observations. Student trainers, international tutors and student editors also met during this week to discuss the First Exercise. Student trainers were asked to evaluate the teams they had mentored in terms of communication skills, self-confidence, technical skills and performance. Was each crew member aware of what was going on at the location? How did crews interact socially, emotionally and artistically?

(i) Comments on the first exercise

Shin Daewe, one of the student mentors, felt that this year the first exercises were much more ambitious than in previous years, when the students had identified more easily accessible locations. This year’s first exercise was very challenging for both mentors and beginner-directors and the search for suitable locations and protagonists was much more demanding.
4. Weeks Two and Three - the Final Films

The second week began with the whole group reflecting on how to approach the topic for the final films: ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People Who Live in Them’. This assignment had to concentrate both on a protagonist and also the building in which they lived and would have to say something about the relationship between the two. The novice filmmakers were therefore required to understand and ‘read’, in cinematic terms, spaces, rooms, bricks and mortar, but also to describe the way their protagonists exist within these spaces. Students were asked to observe the way light falls into rooms, a building’s structure, and also to be aware of how time had changed the building. Student mentors are not usually present during filming but this year they accompanied their teams to the locations. One reason for this decision was that the topic was particularly challenging; moreover, several course participants originated from different parts of Myanmar and were not familiar with Yangon. The tutors and trainers also felt that experienced filmmakers should be present in case problems arose due to lack of individual filming permits.

Some of the old government-owned colonial locations initially chosen by students - such as the Secretariat - proved impossible to film in, since it would have taken weeks to obtain permits. As workshop leader, I was also concerned that such locations would prove too spacious and filmmakers would feel lost inside them. Several interesting protagonists, such as an old librarian from Yangon University, were mooted but not pursued. For his shoot at Insein railway station, novice director Soe Moe Aung was fortunate that his mentor Lay Thida helped to obtain permission from the Railways Ministry in the record time of just one day.

In between looking for locations, identifying suitable protagonists and obtaining permission to film, student-directors were also coached in treatment writing and budgeting by myself, student trainer Pe Maung Same and production manager Hnin Ei Hlaing. Meanwhile, camera and sound operators received practical training to help them acquire more confidence in using a handheld camera and filming interaction between several protagonists.

The ‘People in Old Buildings’ theme was quite a challenge but on the other hand we learnt a lot from the process ... and that is a very good thing.

Thet Oo Maung, 2012 Beginner & director of The Old Photographer

(i) Filming the Final Assignments

After inspecting three different locations, beginner-director Shunn Lei Swe Yee and her crew decided to concentrate on a private house on Min Ye Kyaw Swar Road (formerly known as Saint John’s Road). This two-storey home was bought in 1955 by the grandfather of the film’s female narrator, who still lives there with her children. The house owner, now deceased, was ‘Thakin’ Htein Win, a member of a famous group of anti-colonialists who fought for Burma’s independence alongside Aung San. The rooms of the house are full of memories, it having once been the site of much political debate. The building was also partly destroyed during Cyclone Nargis. Htein Win’s granddaughter, a Burmese teacher in her early forties, welcomed both director and mentor into her home. She explained that six of her family members, some of whom are related to Aung San Suu Kyi, were now living in the house. These included her husband, her young children and a cook, who had plenty of stories to tell. The film’s Lisu cinematographer, David Kyaw Thet Aung, managed to film the rooms sensitively.

During the production I became confused about how to structure the story. My mind went blank and I had no idea what to do. But with the help of the crew and our mentor, Pe Maung Same, I was able to overcome these challenges.

Shunn Lei Swe Yee, 2012 Beginner & director of My Grandfather’s House
Initially, Beginner-director Soe Moe Aung and his crew had identified an old cinema in downtown Yangon as their location. However, besides feeling apprehensive after hearing numerous local reports about the ghosts that allegedly linger there, the crew failed to get access to the building. Instead, this crew set off to film at the nineteenth century railway station at Insein - the township which is also the location of one of Myanmar’s most infamous prisons. The station still bears plenty of original features such as tiles and inscriptions, a tea shop and an engine repair shed. The station manager was thrilled to help with the project.

After watching the rushes I was totally depressed. I thought ‘What have we done? There’s no story!’ ... But after working with the editor to find the best material things didn’t turn out too badly after all.  

Soe Moe Aung, 2012 Beginner & director of Insein Rhythm

Beginner-director Thet Oo Maung’s and his student mentor Thi Ha’s first choice of location was an old house in downtown Yangon near Bogyoke market. His protagonists were a couple living on one of the upper floors. The pair work as online editors and had recently had their first child. The director’s idea was to contrast the baby as a metaphor for the new with the building as the old. However, after viewing their rushes, everyone realised the crew were having trouble gaining emotional access to the couple who came across as rather impersonal. In addition, there was no discernable story in their observations and no apparent link between the couple and the old building. After Thet Su Hlaing, the film’s student editor, and editing tutor George Gragg pronounced it would be too difficult to edit the material, I suggested that Thet Oo Maung - who is a photographer by trade - might do better finding a photographer to portray. With the help of student mentor Pe Maung Same he eventually discovered a retired ninety-year-old photographer who still lives in his old photographic studio in the city. This protagonist, who clearly enjoyed having a crew of young filmmakers around, proved to be the perfect choice in cinematic terms.

(ii) Editing

Our prerequisite of no interviews, or even placing a protagonist in the centre of each of the final assignments, proved to be a tall order - not just for the crews, but also for the student editors. Nonetheless, the editors pulled out all the stops to meet this challenge and, with some help from mentors and tutors, the final films began to take shape. Each student editor soon found themselves taking a new approach: prompted by tutor George Cragg, Kyaw Myo Lwin took his inspiration for the edit of the film about the railway station from the station’s rhythms and made repetition the main element of the aptly named Insein Rhythm.

Having discovered her protagonist was something of a ‘verbal express train’ when interviewed on camera, the director of My Grandfather’s House Shunn Lei Swe Yee decided to follow my advice and use this conversation to create a commentary, which the protagonist recorded in a more measured voice-over to accompany the images. Although not entirely convinced by the idea at first, student editor Zaw Win Htwe admitted to being very pleased with the result.

Of all four final film assignments the most difficult to film was undoubtedly the house known as the ‘Lokanat’ building, portrayed in the film No. 62, Pansodan Street. This rambling and crumbling colonial tenement building is home to many families; it also houses a number of offices and a gallery. Beginner-director Cho Pyone and her crew filmed in several different parts of the building including
a flat on the uppermost floor, a café on the first floor, and a gallery. They even decided to ask Cherry Lwin (who had performed for the student’s first camera exercise) to put in a brief appearance as a protagonist by paying a visit to one of the lawyer’s offices. A particular challenge was trying to describe how these different rooms all belong to the same building. It took the crew several days to film this adequately; moreover, the police appeared one day and ordered them to leave the building immediately. After this, the team were understandably reluctant to go back for a final set of pick-ups - but go back they did - and were able to film without further incident. Student editor Khin Myanmar handled the material with panache and managed to interweave the scenes beautifully.

Meanwhile, student editor Thet Su Hlaing had very little time left to edit Thet Oo Maung’s material about the old Indian photographer, this being the crew’s second project. Not only was this team’s nonagenarian protagonist hard of hearing; he spoke almost no Burmese and could communicate only in Hindi or English. For this reason the crew decided to include the director in the film so that he could stay close to the protagonist and make himself heard. This helped to establish a certain emotional proximity between the old man and the young director, since both were photographers and could talk about different practices – then and now. This closeness helps make The Old Photographer such a moving portrait of this old man. Moreover, Thet Oo Maung and his crew learned how important it is to create an emotional bond with your protagonist.

(iii) Comments: evaluation session with student trainers

Towards the end of the Beginners’ Workshop I met with the student trainers to evaluate the course. Although everyone considered this year’s topic to be particularly challenging, all agreed that the resulting films had turned out well. Nonetheless, a number of aspects of the workshop were criticised and suggestions for improvement were made:

- **Different skills:** this year the participants’ skills differed widely and many were absolute beginners. In future, basic training prior to the workshop should take this into account. Those who have less filmmaking experience should receive more support so the overall skill set of the group is more even when the workshop proper begins. In spite of the difference in skills, all the participants were enthusiastic and eager to learn how to make documentaries.

- **Gender:** this year the male participants proved to be more technically adept than the women. The men soon familiarised themselves with the camera equipment in particular, whereas most of the women were more hesitant about working with it. In spite of the tutors’ and mentors’ best efforts to ensure gender equality throughout the workshop, more men worked behind the camera than in previous workshops, which meant there were more women sound recordists than in previous years.

- **Working as a mentor:** each Beginner-crew was assigned their own student mentor. I reminded student trainers that working as a mentor means being responsible for a novice crew, and that student mentors must be present not only during filming but also at screenings of rushes and to view different cuts of the film.

- **Communication:** participants who came from outside Yangon in particular really enjoyed being able to stay together at the Workshop hotel and soon felt part of a group. During the editing of final film assignments the current practice is to allow only Beginner-directors to stay on at the hotel venue. Student trainers were adamant in future that all twelve Beginners should be allowed to stay at the hotel for the duration of the entire workshop. This would enable participants to receive additional technical training from student trainers; they could also film additional material which could be used during the Introduction to Editing workshop that follows the Beginners’ Workshop.
As soon as I arrived here I felt really happy because I realised the trainers and trainees are equal. We eat and talk together like friends and I appreciate that a lot.

Zin Mar Oo, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop

This has been a golden opportunity for us ... My head is stuffed with stories. Money will be hard to find but I'll try my best to continue making documentaries.

Soe Moe Aung, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop

Now I have practical knowledge of the equipment I really want to get out there and start filming ... I'm determined to continue making documentaries.

Shunn Lei Swe Yee, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop

I've learnt a lot from YFS; it's been really valuable to me. I came here as a complete novice. All the mentors have taught us with great dedication ... The teaching methods are excellent. We've had the chance to use expensive equipment and that is rare in Myanmar. We owe a lot to YFS.

Nu Nu Hlaing, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop

- Time and location of the Workshop: since the workshop had been scheduled during the monsoon in August, there was a lot of rain. This meant filming outdoors often had to be called off. The lack of sunlight made images less luminous. In addition, the constant rain meant all teaching had to be done inside the hotel, which at times felt claustrophobic. It would be better to schedule the workshop during a drier, sunnier time of year. I feel that the Yangon Film School deserves a more pleasant space in which to teach, and that emerging documentary filmmakers’ creativity would flow more freely in an environment which corresponds to the aesthetics of their medium.

I want to continue making documentaries until my dying day!

David Kyaw Thet Aung, participant of 2012 Beginners’ Workshop

V Editing Mentorship of Beginners’ Films

A three-week mentorship held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 17 August to 4 September 2012

Report by YFS Editing Tutors Melanie Sandford and George Cragg

1. Aims and Methodology

The aim of the editing component of the Beginners’ Workshop was to extend the storytelling skills of the four editing students working on the edits of the Beginners’ first film exercises and final films and to give the Beginners a glimpse into what happens in an edit room. Since the editors involved in this year's workshop already had good technical knowledge and editing experience, the module also set out to develop other parts of the editor's job, such as managing an edit, working with a director and the ethics of editing.

This year’s editing students did not require much technical training, but they did need guidance in storytelling techniques. We watched the rushes together and then discussed the possibilities for the edit: what should
the story be? What structure should it have? Who are the characters and the main focus? As perhaps the most important and difficult task for a documentary editor is being able to ‘find’ the story in the rushes, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the material and decide how you should tell the story, at this point we left the editors to spend time with their rushes and then come back to us with their ideas. We adopted this approach throughout the process, trying to help the editors with their choices at regular intervals but leaving them to really get on with it. This was a valuable process for the editors as it forced them to take full responsibility for shaping the two films that each of them edited while gaining a good understanding of the material’s possibilities and their options.

2. Editing the First Exercises

The students chose their international mentors by lucky draw. This was also how the exercises and final films they were to edit were selected. For the first exercise, Mel worked with Kyaw Myo Lwin, who edited Monsoon Prayers, and Khin Myanmar, who drew the straw to edit The Business. These exercises worked well for these students. Monsoon Prayers was largely observational which meant Kyaw Myo Lwin was able to extend his experience into a realm he had not encountered before. He really had to knuckle down and deal with mood and pacing. He struggled at the beginning to gain an entry into the material but once he hit his stride and discovered the film’s ‘mood’ he was off and running. Khin Myanmar, who has much less experience then Kyaw Myo Lwin, was well suited to cutting The Business since this was an interview-based film, which is easier to edit. Having felt that there was some material missing, she was heavily involved in the discussions with the film’s Beginner crew about pick-ups.

George mentored A Wing and a Prayer edited by Zaw Win Htwe and Painting edited by Thet Su Hlaing. Both films posed rather interesting and contrasting narrative challenges. For Painting, Thet Su Hlaing had a lot of good material of a man painting and an excellent interview. However, although both elements were very good and complemented each other, as soon as the painting footage was interrupted with a piece of interview it completely broke the delicacy of the observation of the painting process. The solution Thet Su Hlaing came up with was to simply have a small piece of the interview at the end of the film. This was an unusual solution in that the YFS films normally have interview throughout but it worked very effectively for this film as it allowed the viewer to really enter into the mind of the painter as he worked. In a Wing and a Prayer Zaw Win Htwe chose to approach the lack of narrative by using, in as far as was possible, the available material to create the feeling of a journey through a day. The film shows the life of a monk from the ceremonial to the private. It was quite difficult as the material was not very comprehensive but Zaw Win Htwe managed to give the viewer the experience of the monastic routine. In this way the two films were completely different in their approach to editing: Zaw Win Htwe took a small amount of material and created a large story from it while Thet Su Hlaing took a fairly large amount of good material and made it into a small but very intimate and detailed look at a man at work. Both editors successfully identified and applied the right approach for their films.

I thought I was a really cool cameraman and everything I shot was great. But later I discovered my shots wouldn’t cut together in the edit. The editor taught me no matter how beautiful my shots looked they’re useless if they won’t cut together.

Soe Kyaw Tin Htun, 2012 Beginner & cameraman

3. Editing the Final Films

The theme for the final assignments this year was ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People who live in them’. This was very challenging as it is much harder to tell the story of a building than a single person. To further test the students, the Beginners’ Workshop this year set them the task of trying to film with as little interview as possible. These two criteria raised various issues regarding the films we were supervising. Once again, the students drew straws for the final films and their international mentors. Mel worked with Khin
Myanmar on No. 62, Pansodan Street and Zaw Win Htwe on My Grandfather’s House whilst George worked with Thet Su Hlaing on The Old Photographer and Kyaw Myo Lwin on Insein Rhythm.

No. 62, Pansodan Street
This is a ‘conversation-free’ film which makes use of incidental dialogue only. It was a great opportunity for Khin Myanmar to try something very different. Whilst she was excited, she was also nervous as to whether she would be able to deliver the goods and I had several pep talks to try and build her self-confidence. Working on this film allowed her to gain valuable experience in the art of structuring – or rather re-structuring – since she must have tried every possible variation when it came to ordering sequences. The eponymous building at the film’s centre had a rather strange and confusing design and it was a major challenge to convey its geography in a way that would be intelligible to the viewer. There were also several pick-up shoots to try and cover the gaps from the first shoot. At one point the international camera tutor suggested that Khin Myanmar should join the crew on a pick-up so that she could understand the building better. She politely but firmly declined, wisely reasoning that it wasn’t a good idea because, as the film’s editor, she needed to maintain a distance if she was to continue to try to see the film as the audience would. Not only was she correct, she also exhibited confidence in standing up to a foreign tutor. The new material added a fresh challenge since it meant her previous work on the film had to be restructured to accommodate it. Nonetheless Khin Myanmar proved to be tireless and patient throughout the edit - both qualities that are crucial in an editor.

My Grandfather’s House
Just as Kyaw Myo had struggled at first working on Monsoon Prayers, Zaw Win Htwe also had a hard time discovering the mood and story of My Grandfather’s House. It was the first time he had ever edited a more stylised, narrated film and he spent a great deal of time at the beginning trying to order his material into different groups to find something that would inspire him to discover the film’s structure. Pacing, space, mood and the geography of the house are very important in this film. Zaw Win Htwe had to slow down his usual editing pace considerably. He and I talked a lot about how important it is to feel your way into the material. He was also very supportive of the film’s young director Shunn Lei and took time to advise her when it came to recording the film’s commentary by the protagonist. This voice-over narration was written during the edit, and was based on a filmed interview - the first time this technique had been used in a YFS film. When interviewed, the film’s protagonist had spoken extremely quickly in a way that would have jarred with the film’s pacing and cinematography. When narrated, however, her comments gave the film a more reflective dimension in keeping with its topic about the building’s history.

Cries and Whispers & The Old Photographer
The first film mentored by George and edited by Thet Su Hlaing started off being about a young family of journalists living in an old apartment building. However, on viewing the rushes Thet Su Hlaing thought - and everyone agreed - that the protagonists were not interesting enough and there was not enough of a story to make a good film. Nevertheless the material was well shot and had an interesting atmosphere. Beginner director Thet Oo Maung had by now decided to shoot again with a new protagonist. While Thet Su Hlaing was waiting for the new material we decided to try and edit a fiction film out of the original rushes. This was a very useful exercise for Thet Su Hlaing and provoked an interesting debate for the group. Thet Su Hlaing edited an effective short film about a dysfunctional couple who don’t seem to be coping with their young baby - which was not at all the situation in reality. This led to a discussion about the power of editing to manipulate material and the ethics and responsibility involved in the editor’s job.
With the edit of *The Old Photographer*, the key question facing Thet Su Hlaing was how to integrate the director into the film. Since the protagonist was very old and deaf it was difficult for the director to talk to him without appearing in the image. A long discussion ensued about this and the crews filmed a lot of additional material about the director travelling through Yangon and arriving at the old man’s place. There was also a voiceover with the director’s thoughts about Yangon and photography. But, in the end, Thet Su Hlaing decided to drop this prelude - which I think was definitely the right decision. The old man was extremely charming and interesting as a protagonist and the film did not need to be framed by the director coming and going: it was much better to let the photographer speak for himself. Sometimes in an edit it is difficult to take a big decision such as this which changes the whole feeling of the film, but once Thet Su Hlaing had tried to use the material with the director and had seen that it did not work she took the courageous decision to cut it and successfully found new ways to start and end the film.

**Insein Rhythm**

Kyaw Myo Lwin edited *Insein Rhythm*, about a train station in the suburbs of Yangon. Again this was problematic as there was no-one who resembled a main character or anything like a story. There was, however, excellent material which oozed atmosphere and fantastic sounds. We decided as a group that it would be a good exercise for Kyaw Myo Lwin to try and edit the piece with a strong focus on the sound, and build up a train-like rhythm with the noises from the station. He found this a real challenge as it was a completely different approach to structuring a film and he struggled initially to get to grips with it. But he worked extremely hard and in the end created a compelling and funny film. This exercise was a great success in pushing Kyaw Myo Lwin to explore new approaches to storytelling and it was pleasing to finish with a distinctive and different film.

4. **Evaluation**

We both feel the editing component of the Beginners’ Workshop can be considered a great success. It was a very good idea to have a little more time than in previous years to edit the Beginners’ films and we think this additional time should now be included in all future Beginners’ Workshops as a matter of course. It was crucial for the Beginner filmmakers to see their fellow students grappling with the material they had filmed and, perhaps more importantly, to watch their fellow students operating the editing suite with confidence and creating their films from the raw material so competently. All the films which came out of workshop are well edited and really challenged the editors involved. It is important for YFS’ more experienced editors to be left on their own more often to allow them to find solutions themselves. Our ‘hands off’ approach worked very well.

A key part of the editor’s job is usually the relationship with the director. Of the two films George supervised, one director - Soe Moe Aung - played a very active role in the edit and as a result developed a close creative relationship with his editor Kyaw Myo Lwin. This was not the case with the other film where Thet Su Hlaing was more or less left to get on with it on her own. Although this can be one approach, in this case Thet Su Hlaing would have benefited from having a director in the edit room in order to listen to her ideas and confirm her own decisions. We recommend making all directors play a more active role in editing.

(i) **Technical Note**

As Apple is not continuing to make or support the classic version of Final Cut Pro, our current editing systems will soon be out of date and will not be able to cope with the new HD material. A new editing system will have to be adopted and this will involve new software, hardware and some additional teaching to help with the crossover to a new platform.
VI  Sound Design Workshop

A two week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 30 July - 11 August 2012

Report by YFS Sound Tutor Ivan Horák

1. Workshop Rationale

Ivan Horák: the third edition of the Sound Design workshop was met with a great interest from professionals and artists because this aspect of post-production is virtually nonexistent in Myanmar; in fact, it is largely ignored by local producers. A great challenge lies ahead for filmmakers with a finer understanding of film: they must persuade producers and also the audience that all aspects of the filmmaking process, including sound design, will improve the technical and artistic quality of the films they are making and viewing. Sound Design workshops like the ones run by YFS are essential to help underline the importance of post-production sound and also to foster both the technical and creative understanding of this discipline.

2. Participants

The workshop was joined by people working in Myanmar’s film industry such as Aung Tha Pyay who is the Media Unit Editor for Thingaha Organisation, Slyne who is sound designer at Sky Net TV Channel and Ko Ko Lwin who is sound supervisor at the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise; by sound mixers and engineers Aye Zaw Maung Maung and Sai Kham Leik who both work at FM Bagan Radio Station in Yangon and Maung Swan Lian who works at Padamyar FM, also in Yangon; and even by professional film music composer, Diramore. The workshop was also attended by YFS students: director, sound recordist and designer Sai Kong Kham and cinematographer and sound recordist Kyaw Ko Ko. YFS directing students Maung Okkar and Seng Mai (the only female on the course) were also present as observers.

3. Content and Methodology

During the course I explained the basics and details of finalising post-production sound in documentary, docu-fiction and highly stylised audiovisual works. The course was divided into individual sections as we gradually moved from theory into practice. The sound designer is neither solely an artist nor solely a technician. The sound designer’s skill is to balance those two qualities: to understand the technology, but also to be able to work creatively. Students cannot learn sound design and its many aspects just by watching films. Film sound theory is very important in order to understand the links between image and sound; it is equally important to become familiar with all the elements of the soundtrack. Another key aspect of the sound designer’s role is communication with the director, producer, music composer or editor. The workshop developed strategies for how to improve this in Myanmar.

In the first part of the workshop we examined the role of the sound designer. We took a look at the different aspects of film sound - the components of the soundtrack, the different kinds of spoken words used in film (dialogue, voiceover, off-screen voices) as well as sound effects, ambient and environmental sounds and, last but not least, music. Film music can be one of the most sensitive and emotional parts of a film, and it is very important to understand its power and to use music carefully, especially in documentary filmmaking. An interesting exercise was the comparison and analysis of a scene from a Burmese film alongside a similar scene from a western movie. Students were quickly able to understand the power of sound design and directly compare and contrast the quality in the two pieces of work.
The class used four ProTools sound suites by Digidesign/AVID. ProTools is an efficient system which is used widely by film sound professionals. The four mini sound designer suites were also equipped with high-class professional studio monitoring systems made by Genelec which meant that students were able to listen clearly to the quality of the sound. I compared three different pairs of sound monitors to demonstrate how important it is to have high-quality professional equipment.

During the technical hands-on part of the workshop the students were given a ProTools digital audio workstation. Each student picked one of the exercises filmed during the 2012 Beginners’ Workshop and set about making a simple sound edit and finalising of the film. They could work freely and experiment without interference from the directors. In this way, they could discover the power of sound design for themselves. Some elected to use music and we discussed the connection between music and other elements on the soundtrack.

(i) Recording Sessions

This year’s course was again supplemented by music recording sessions in improvised conditions with both professional and amateur musicians. We spent one afternoon recording with the musicians from Gitameit Music Centre, a music school and community centre in downtown Yangon which offers exchanges between Myanmar musicians and musicians from abroad. A second afternoon was spent at the studio of workshop participant and film music composer Diramore. Both sessions were invaluable in helping the participants to understand and gain practical knowledge about the ways the sound designer and director must guide musicians or a composer and share their creative vision for the emotions they want to be conveyed in the film. Music should be composed by a composer after consultation with the sound designer and director or, alternatively, the musician may improvise under the supervision of the sound designer. The students also practised accompanying a piece of footage, using high-performance digital instruments with a MIDI keyboard and an iPad tablet with a selection of pre-installed instruments.

(ii) Film Screenings

Films from Myanmar and other countries were screened in order to examine the creative use of sound. These included the films of Czech animator Jan Svankmajer; Wes Anderson’s stop motion animation of the Roald Dahl story The Fantastic Mr Fox (USA, 2009); the anthology film Tokyo! (Japan, 2008); 66 Seasons (Slovakia, 2003), a documentary about the old swimming pool in Košice, Slovakia covering a timespan from 1936 to 2002; and a comparison of the soundtracks in Godfrey Reggio’s Koyaanisqatsi (USA, 1982) – featuring music by composer Philip Glass – with Nikolaus Geyrhalter’s Our Daily Bread (Germany, 2005).

4. Results

In Myanmar, where a film’s sound at present tends to be quickly finalised by picture editors during the final stages of the edit, the benefits of a Sound Design Workshop are manifold. All films deserve to be
completed in terms of sound, both from the technical and creative points of view. Fostering a new generation of sound designers is important in order to raise standards of the media in Myanmar. Sound is one of the key - if not the most important - emotional components in a film.

The majority of participants in the YFS Sound Design workshop grasped this concept, which was the chief goal of the course. The students were all very enthusiastic and creatively involved in the practical exercises and also absorbed the theory. It was an honour to share my knowledge with them and I will be happy to continue teaching them in future editions, in more advanced classes which take on more demanding technical and stylisation tasks.

VII Advanced Camera Workshop: Light and Rain and Old Buildings in Yangon

A four day workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 15 - 18 August 2012

Report by YFS Cinematography Tutor Lars Barthel

1. Participants

This year’s advanced camera course faced the challenge that only two experienced camera students - Tun Lynn and Khin Maung Kyaw - had time to participate in further camera training. Hence it was decided to invite Beginners from 2012 to join the course. Ambition and interest in a topic usually develop when students have gained more confidence in their technical skills. Thus, to have Beginners participating in an advanced camera course was rather a contradiction. In addition, after having already shot two or even three films during the 2012 Beginners’ Workshop, many of these students were exhausted. Nevertheless, they where willing to participate and male Beginner students David Kyaw Thet Aung, Han Lin Twin, Sai Nyi Nyi, Soe Kyaw Tin Htun, and female Beginner students Lin Hnin Aye, Nu Nu Hlaing and Zin Mar Oo joined second year students Khin Maung Kyaw and Tun Lynn as well as their more experienced peers and YFS mentors Pe Maung Same and Hnin Ei Hlaing in a workshop intended to focus on the monsoon weather and the wealth of colonial buildings in former capital with the title ‘Light and Rain and Old Buildings in Yangon’.

2. Rationale for the Workshop

Despite Sound Tutor Ivan, Workshop Supervisor Hnin Ei Hlaing and I going on several recces in Yangon, we had real difficulties finding locations which were both safe to shoot in and where YFS could gain permission to film. Unfortunately one day before the course began, permission for the Secretariat building - which was by then our sole remaining location - was also withdrawn. I had to decide whether to abandon the whole idea of shooting old buildings and find another topic. However, I believed there might still be a chance to film such buildings and that there was another important aim of this year’s Advanced Camera Workshop: namely, the rare situation in Yangon, with the city having so many valuable historical buildings - buildings and places which represent the history of their country and which might vanish all too soon if no awareness is created about them. Time is running out.

After discussing this situation with the students, it was interesting to discover that most of them were unaware of the problem and had never given it any thought. Thus in its best sense, the Advanced Camera Workshop could also create an ‘emotional awareness’ amongst some of the students. I decided that the initial workshop concept was worth pursuing.

Since we had found a quasi-legal access to the Pegu Club, I decided to concentrate on this and the exteriors of other buildings in the city. Filming a building from the outside is a time-consuming and challenging task which involves both difficult camera positions and the need to solve unforeseen situations. But it also gives a camera person confidence when they stand their ground and are able to obtain a good result.
In the rainy season of 2012, Yangon presented its old buildings to us in all their unknown and mysterious colonial history - a history which has almost been forgotten by the people of the city. It was a time when doors slowly opened up again. One could see what had been lost and what still remained. Many huge buildings have stood empty since the Burmese government left them years ago. The Yangon Heritage Fund and the Myanmar Architects’ Association have created a book of 30 selected buildings from the time of the British Empire which they believe should be preserved first; we used this book to inform our filming.

3. Content and Methodology

On Day 1 we filmed an interview with the British architect and conservator Alan Baxter, who was invited by the Yangon Heritage Fund to exhort the government to conserve their architectural heritage and to offer suggestions of future use for the city’s colonial buildings. After that, two teams filmed the historical city from the top of the Sakura Tower. We concentrated on framing and panning. We then met another crew in the city and came up with the idea of asking a young Indian-looking man to accompany us to one of the disintegrating landmarks of colonial Yangon, the Pegu Club.

The Pegu Club is a vast teak building constructed in the late 1880s as a gentleman’s club for British army officers and civilian administrators. After Myanmar gained its independence, it became an officer’s mess for the Burmese army and eventually a storage space for military supplies. It now lies almost deserted and its mysterious staircases and huge empty halls provided an excellent space for the students to create enigmatic pictures. Inspired by the Indian-looking man, they filmed against the colonial backdrop and tried to conjure up a time when the Indian staff members at the club were called ‘boys’ and only white guests where allowed inside. The fairly gloomy interior light and the rain added their share to the filming. We left the Club when it grew dark.

On Day 2, after watching and discussing the rushes (there was almost too much material), I decided to split the group into four teams. The task for the afternoon until it grew dark was to film several buildings from the outside: the Government Press Building, the Post Office, the former New Law Courts and the former Burma Railways Company. The students assigned to film the High Court were unable to find it since they were not from Yangon. They decided to film a different building instead but - as they later told the production manager - they felt insecure when asked by the police what they were up to. This incident created anxiety about further filming in downtown Yangon and also made participants question its value. Bearing in mind the problems participants in the Beginners’ Workshop had already experienced at the ‘Lokanat’ Building (No. 62, Pansodan Street), and realising that exterior filming was too complicated and threatened by the police, we decided to break off the shoot early.

On Day 3, the group also decided to cancel the scheduled shoot at the Pegu Club. I disagreed but had to respect the group’s consensus. Instead we concentrated on filming interviews with the Beginner students on Day 3 and 4, which were necessary for the evaluation of that workshop. This allowed the participants to work with light whilst creating appropriate images within a studio atmosphere. It was a good exercise for the Beginner camera students and they had sufficient time to execute it.

4. Evaluation

Unfortunately, in spite of our determination to film ‘Light and Rain and Old Buildings in Yangon’, we were unable to immerse ourselves in the topic because in Myanmar it is still difficult to gain access to government buildings. This then is the reality of a process where everything official is still uncertain and in a state of flux. It was, nonetheless a worthwhile exercise to attempt; two of the advanced camera students in particular have developed an interest in the topic and one of them is determined to continue filming these buildings.
VIII Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop

A two week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 22 August - 4 September 2012

Report by YFS Screenwriting Tutor Rachel Mathews

1. Rationale for the Workshop

In 2012, YFS was keen to establish a larger pool of screenwriting talent upon which it can draw, in particular to develop short scripts for the True Fictions III Workshop proposed for the winter of 2013. To this end, the School held another Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop. The Workshop focussed specifically on helping writers to develop dramatic screen-stories situated at the intriguing borderland between documentary and fiction: stories inspired by real-life people and events which can be shot on a low budget using actual locations and non-actors.

Our decision to develop ‘True Fictions’ or docu-drama type projects was given further impetus by the 2nd Wathann Film Festival running in Yangon from 5-9 September 2012. The festival, founded by YFS-trained filmmakers Thu Thu Shein and Thaiddhi, showcased documentaries and short fiction films made in Myanmar during the past two years. Whilst there were an encouraging number of strong and interesting documentaries (many of which were made or mentored by YFS-trained filmmakers), the short fiction films were - as the panel of judges themselves acknowledged - less accomplished. Many mimicked the style of music videos or computer games. The stories were derivative of Hollywood action movies and failed to acknowledge the wealth of real-life dramatic situations to be found in Myanmar.

Clearly there is a gap in attainment when it comes to the short fiction films currently being produced in Myanmar. It is hoped that screenwriting workshops such as this one can help to foster an interest and pride in local stories based upon the many challenging and fascinating situations unfolding in this rapidly changing country.

2. Participants

The participants for the Workshop were recruited during the extensive round of interviews undertaken by YFS Director Lindsey Merrison and the YFS Committee in Yangon during the spring of 2012. Some participants were encouraged to apply by current YFS students. Others heard about the School via its website and Facebook page or because of the profile YFS films are increasingly gaining across Myanmar. For example, short fiction film The Bamboo Grove, written by Dr Aung Min during a previous YFS Screenwriting Workshop and directed by Khin Khin Hsu, has been playing on rotation on the Democratic Voice of Burma’s TV channel alongside Lay Thida’s documentary An Unreported Story (although it must be said that unfortunately both films were screened without the School’s permission).
The majority of participants had already had short stories and/or articles published in magazines and newspapers. One, Aye Myat Maw, works as a screenwriter in the Myanmar television industry. Another, Thwe Myo Nyunt, owns a bookshop in Yangon. Su Su Hlaing is a freelance journalist with an impressive roster of articles to her name; Thandar Khine wrote and directed a short fiction film screened at the 2012 Art of Freedom Film Festival; Cho Wut Yee is a respected food journalist on one of Myanmar’s new lifestyle magazines. Win Khant Maung and Cho Wutyi Lwin had both recently returned from abroad: Win Khant Maung studied engineering in Singapore but his true love is film; Cho Wutyi Lwin had been manager of a clothing factory in Jakarta but wrote short stories in her limited spare time and succeeded in having them published in Myanmar magazines. Kyaw Swar Hein had already written some screenplays and exhibited a real passion for film. Sai Nyi Nyi had just completed the YFS Beginners’ Workshop and was keen to discover more about screenwriting for his job at Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise. Aung Zaya, the son of a famous - and persecuted - theatre director, travelled from Mandalay to attend the workshop. He had no internet connection and the YFS Committee tracked him down after his initial expression of interest by finding his address at the local post office and sending him a letter of invitation which, given the vagaries of the Myanmar postal system, is a miracle that he ever received. The group of ten writers was joined by Khaing Sape Saw, one of the YFS Management Trainees who wished to experience YFS teaching at first hand.

Overall, the 2012 cohort was more cine-literate than in previous years: this is the first time I met students who had already seen films such as de Sica’s Bicycle Thieves. The group gelled well and were swift to participate in discussions and give feedback on each other’s work. They were particularly astute at analysing the films – both shorts and features – we watched and discussed during class and were vocal in expressing their cinematic likes and dislikes.

3. Content and Methodology

In keeping with the Workshop’s focus on stories inspired by real life, the participants were asked on Day 1 to draw up a list of ten people they found interesting. These could be friends, family members, work colleagues or people they had heard or read about in the media. The participants whittled this list down to the three most interesting and ‘pitched’ (verbally presented) these people to a partner who chose which character they wanted to hear more about. The participants then presented this single person to the rest of the group who discussed possibilities for the stories which might be developed for these characters (some of whom came with readymade plots attached).

Although a couple of participants changed their characters on Days 2 and 3, overall this exercise worked well as an initial impetus for finding a story. Most importantly, these stories were derived from real-life situations. It was inevitable - and necessary - that as the scripts developed they moved away from the reality which inspired them but the exercise ensured the characters and stories were grounded in a contemporary and recognisable Myanmar. This was particularly the case for Thandar Khine’s story about a nun torn between the contemplative life of the cloister and becoming a laywoman to help her destitute family. Thandar Khine was inspired to write a story for this character after meeting the actual nun in her neighbourhood. She conducted extensive interviews with this nun and explored her convent in order to perfect the details of her script.

The characters and stories developed were diverse, ranging from Sai Nyi Nyi’s tale of a wily old grandmother (based on his own) outraged by the unladylike behaviour of her tomboy granddaughter to Su Su Hlaing’s young boy who catches eels in the paddy fields to sell at market and whose only dream is of attending school; from Kyaw Swar’s three homeless boys who make a living recycling cans and are perplexed about what they...
should do when they find an abandoned baby to Cho Wutyi Lwin’s little girl (based on her younger sister) whose family lies to her that her beloved father has gone abroad when in fact he has been imprisoned by the military regime. It is a sign of the new openness in Myanmar that a story like this was developed during the Workshop: writers in previous years tended to be much more circumspect about criticising the authorities.

At first, we were totally ignorant with no idea what to write about. But as the tutor took us along, teaching us how to write our scripts step by step, and we came to know much more about the entire process.

Sai Nyi Nyi, film technician & Beginners’ Screenwriting participant

Days 3 and 4 focussed on helping the writers really get to know their characters, using techniques such as ‘hot-seating’, writing back-stories and filling in character questionnaires. The participants were encouraged to think about the location(s) of their stories. This led to an interesting discussion about cultural tourism: viewers from abroad, for example at international film festivals, want to see more of Myanmar which, to many, is still a mysterious and exotic land. Although the writers should be true to their characters and stories, it will not harm the chances of their scripts for them to be set in interesting or even picturesque places. This discussion led to Cho Wut Yee changing her story entirely, moving from a rather generic romantic comedy to a much more personal piece based on her experience of getting lost on a pilgrimage to the Golden Rock Pagoda in Mon State when she was a child.

After a day off - during which participants were encouraged to visit the locations of their stories and take photographs to help visualise their scripts - the Workshop began to tackle one of the most challenging aspects of screenwriting: structure. The discussion of three act structure was greatly helped by reference to the films screened in class. Analysing the structure of a completed film is much easier than finding a structure for one’s own story and it was instructive that no matter how diverse these films were - from Andrea Arnold’s gritty, Oscar-winning short Wasp, to Abbas Kiarostami’s Iranian feature, Where is the Friend’s Home? - the students could identify a clear and convincing three acts within them all. Such analysis fed back into their own work and enabled them to begin plotting their stories.

Before the participants actually started to write their scripts, we spent two days looking at dialogue. This can be overused by less experienced screenwriters but also plays a key part in the revelation of character and plot. We analysed films - including Adam Davidson’s award-winning, near silent short, The Lunch Date - to see how screen dialogue appears to mimic but is actually markedly different from actual speech and to discuss key concepts such as subtext and narration. The participants filled in ‘dialogue check-lists’ to pinpoint how their characters might speak and considered the type of things these characters would (and would not) say.

The Workshop culminated in two days spent analysing the dramatic climax of a story - and its ending. We discussed Hollywood endings, ‘up’ and ‘down’ endings, open and closed endings and the concept of a ‘just ending’. At the request of one of the participants, Su Su Hlaing, the final day of teaching also looked at the Seven Basic Plots as identified by story analysts such as Vladimir Propp, Joseph Campbell and Christopher Booker (in his book of the same name). It is one of the signs of the success of the Workshop that each student was able to identify the archetypal story elements present in their own piece of work.

As with previous years, the final day of the Workshop was devoted to a script-reading and feedback session with the writers ‘casting’ their stories from the rest of class and having the chance to hear their work read out loud. Some students proved themselves to be astute - but also generous - analysts of the work of their peers. As is usual with first drafts (especially ones developed over such a short period of time), all the stories require further work but I was encouraged to hear some vivid and promising first draft scripts. YFS’ long-standing translator, Aung Myin Tun, was invaluable as always in preparing English copies of the scripts (all the writers wrote in Myanmar) and, in a couple of cases, providing simultaneous translations of pieces of work which had been handed in late.
By joining this course, I’ve become more inspired to do what I love doing, which is writing. And I’ve come to know the techniques of screenwriting in a systematic way. Otherwise, I would just be writing in the dark.

Su Su Hlaing, journalist & Beginners’ Screenwriting participant

4. Film Screenings

The practical work was supported by a variety of film screenings, both of short and feature-length films. Shorts which really captured the participants’ imaginations included Andrea Arnold’s Oscar-winning Wasp with its striking moral dilemma facing its single-mother protagonist and Andrew Okpeaha Maclean’s stunningly photographed On the Ice, set on the ice-fields in the far north of Alaska. Borom Sarret directed in 1969 by Ousmane Sembene, one of the first films ever made in Senegal, bore striking similarities to the lives of the trishaw drivers plying their trade in Yangon in 2012 and rang many bells with the students, as did The Sheep Thief, Asif Kapadia’s gripping drama set in Indian Rajasthan.

Following feedback from previous script classes, I selected more Asian feature films including Akira Kurosawa’s Rashomon and Tokyo Story by Yasujirō Ozu. The students responded enthusiastically to Wong Kar Wai’s fluid, playful Chungking Express. The real favourites amongst the screenings were Abbas Kiarostami’s sympathetic depiction of an unjustly treated child in Where Is the Friend’s Home? and Vittorio de Sica’s neo-realist Bicycle Thieves. The simple, linear plots and identification with a protagonist who has a clear - but apparently increasingly unobtainable - goal, set alongside both filmmakers’ unflinching view of hardship and the effects it has upon the human spirit, made these films key works of the Workshop and the participants referred to them again and again in relation to their own work.

There was something to learn from each of the screenings. It would be good if we could watch films like this not just at the workshop, but when we’re on our own as well .... the screenings gave us a lot of ideas.             Thandar Khine, filmmaker & Beginners’ Screenwriting participant

5. Next Steps

Following the Workshop, each student received written feedback via email analysing their first draft script and suggesting ways to develop the second draft. YFS Director Lindsey Merrison, the YFS Committee and myself read all eleven scripts and reached a consensus upon which projects we would like to develop further for the next True Fictions workshop. These are: Su Su Hlaing’s To School, about the eel-fisher who desperately wants to go to school; Kyaw Swar’s The Boys and the Baby, about three street-kids who find an abandoned baby and have to decide what to do with it; Lost, Cho Wut Yee’s autobiographical story about a young girl becoming separated from her family on a pilgrimage to the Golden Rock Pagoda; and Hope, Cho Wutyi Lwin’s story based on the experiences of her younger sister when their father became a political prisoner. These four scripts are currently at second draft stage. They will be developed to final draft stage by June 2013 when two will be chosen to be taken forward into production during the True Fictions III Workshop in winter 2013.

6. Evaluation

The quality of the scripts produced in the 2012 workshop is markedly stronger than those produced in previous YFS screenwriting workshops. This is possibly for two reasons:

1) the quality of writers in 2012 was higher than in previous years. The YFS recruitment process is becoming more refined over time. In addition, YFS is developing a name for itself within the film and literary
Iii) as a tutor, I am becoming more knowledgeable about what works with Myanmar writers and what does not. When I first taught with the YFS, I was coming out of an exclusively western background but I have since learned more about the country and the types of stories Myanmar writers are interested in developing. Of course, there are universal principles in storytelling but the more I understand about the students, the more satisfactory the workshops tend to be. 2012’s focus on developing ‘true fictions’ type stories was useful in not only encouraging the writers to develop scripts which YFS could feasibly produce but also in grounding these stories firmly in Myanmar and in the authentic experiences of the writers and the characters - often taken from real-life - about whom they are writing.

*Studying under Rachel was like a family relationship. We could ask anything openly. Whatever difficulties we had with our stories, she would make suggestions. It was really good.*

**Cho Wut Yee, magazine journalist & Beginners’ Screenwriting participant**

### IX Introduction to Editing Documentary

A four week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 11 September to 6 October 2012

**Report by YFS Editing Tutor Melanie Sandford**

#### 1. Aims

The aim of the four week Introduction to Editing Workshop was to introduce the new intake of YFS students to the key storytelling element of documentary filmmaking: editing. Participants would gain a first impression and experience of the great range of possibilities, challenges and tasks faced by professional documentary film editors. Students who had indicated an interest in specialising in directing, cinematography, sound or producing would develop an understanding of the complexity of the editor’s job and learn how to communicate and work with editors; those thinking of becoming editors themselves were invited to take a closer look at this profession to discover if they were suited to this role.

#### 2. Participants

The target group included young members in the YFS group who had completed one Beginners’ Workshop. Participants were drawn from a demographic of 22-40 year olds from all walks of life and a variety of ethnic communities. In keeping with YFS gender parity, there were five female and five male participants in this workshop. Many came from far-flung locations all over Myanmar. The women were Zin Mar Oo who works as a portrait photographer in Mandalay and first saw YFS films at a monastery library in her home town; Nu Nu Hlaing from Bogalay in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta who became interested in film after attending a course at Myanmar Egress; 21-year-old Shunn Lei Swe Yee who is active in a Myanmar Youth Network and whose parents are writer-publishers; Lin Hnin Aye (21) whose father is also a well-known writer; and Anna Biak Tha Mawi, who wrote and co-directed the YFS film *Bungkus* in 2010 and who is a Chin national. The men on the course were Han Lin Htwin from Taunggyi in Shan State who works as a videographer and is a member of the Pa-O ethnic group; two males from near Mandalay - David Kyaw Thet Aung of the Lisu ethnic group and photographer Soe Kyaw Tin Htun - audio technician Soe Moe Aung from Hmawbi north of Yangon; and Yangon Photography Festival winner Tun Lynn, who joined YFS in 2011.
In addition to the above-mentioned novice editors, two additional YFS participants received editing tuition from international tutor Melanie Sandford during the Editing Workshop. One was female editing student Khin Myanmar from the 2011 intake who was invited to work independently on the edit of the evaluation film: *About the 2012 Beginners’ Workshop*; the other was male director-editor Aung Nwai Htway. A member of YFS since 2007, this student was guided in several one-on-one sessions with Melanie as he continued to shape the international version of his award-winning documentary, *Behind the Screen*.

*It's really fun editing and finding the solution for problems in the footage and story.*

Anna Biak Tha Mawi, artist, writer & Introduction to Documentary Editing participant

3. Content and Methodology

Taught by international editing tutor Melanie Sandford and local YFS editing mentor Myo Min Khin, the Workshop combined classroom lectures with hands-on editing exercises and screenings and analysis of a variety of films edited by the two tutors and other industry professionals.

*The students can ask local trainers like me what they want to know in their mother tongue and I can share my experience of editing in Myanmar with them. Mel teaches the editing concepts and then I help them technically and share my knowledge and experience.*

Myo Min Khin, YFS editor and local editing mentor

*Of course we learned a lot from the analysis of the international mentors through translation but I was also very glad to have local mentors because I can talk freely and openly to them in my own language.*

David Kyaw Thet Aung, Introduction to Documentary Editing participant

Classroom lectures and discussions

The lectures began with a discussion about the personality of a film editor and their tasks. The class then went through the digital editing suite components and discussed workflow with regard to project planning; setting up a Final Cut Pro project; logging and capturing material; and preparing rushes for screening. After screening the rushes of the first batch of material the participants were to cut - in this case, material filmed in the observational style - the class discussed how to go about selecting rushes for a first assembly of the film and making a first assembly. After a look at basic editing rules and the history of film editing, we had a screening and discussion of everyone’s rough cuts for Exercise 1: working with observational material.

*On the completion of Exercise 1,* we had a group rushes screening for Exercise 2: editing an interview and then looked at how to make a cut on paper and how to lay an interview over an edited picture sequence. We then took a look at creating titles and subtitles before a screening and discussion of the rough cuts for Exercise 2.

*On the completion of Exercise 2,* we returned to the classroom for a discussion of structuring documentary films, followed by a rushes screening for Exercise 3: working associatively, creating meaning, using music. The participants were taught as a class how to import and convert music and how to log and transfer high definition footage. Our final classroom activity was a screening and discussion of all the rough cuts the students had created in response to Exercise 3.
Hands-on exercises in the editing rooms

The first task the students undertook in the editing rooms was a paper cut of photographs taken from the film *Burmese Butterfly*, directed and edited by YFS student and editing mentor Hnin Ei Hlaing. We then discussed how to install the editing suite and set up a Final Cut Pro project before logging and capturing for Exercise 1: working with observational material. The students prepared rushes for screening and selected rushes for a first assembly before cutting their first piece of work on the editing machines for Exercise 1 itself. The exercise went from first assembly to rough cut which the students then practised exporting for the classroom screenings.

For Exercise 2: editing an interview, the students imported clips and then undertook a paper edit and a first assembly. The was followed by a rough cut and then the students practiced creating titles and subtitles before exporting this rough cut in Quicktime format so all the cuts could be screened and discussed in the classroom.

The students went through the same process for Exercise 3: working associatively, creating meaning, using music, importing clips, undertaking a first assembly followed by a rough cut. As they were completing Exercise 3, the tutors held individual talks with each participant to discuss their progress during the workshop and make suggestions about future activities. The Quicktimes for Exercise 3 were exported and each one screened and discussed in class.

I find it really intriguing to think of the storyline and decide where to add something and where to cut. That’s my favourite part of editing.

*Soe Moe Aung, Beginner director & Introduction to Documentary Editing participant*

I’m happy when I’m editing ... It’s like the jigsaw puzzles we used to do as kids. Everything is scattered and we don’t know which piece goes where. We have to arrange them to give the film a shape. It’s like a brain-teaser and a lot of fun.

*Soe Kyaw Tin Htun, Beginner cameraman & Introduction to Documentary Editing participant*

Film screenings and editing analysis

The students watched and discussed a wide variety of documentary and fiction films during the workshop. These included:

- **Sisters In Law** (2005; dir: Kim Longinotto, Florence Ayisi; editor: Oliver Huddleston)
  With the subtitle ‘Stories from a Cameroon Court’, this feature-length documentary portrays aspects of women’s lives in an observational style using no interviews

- **Man On Wire** (2008; dir: James Marsh; editor: Jinx Godfrey)
  Feature length documentary about tightrope walker Philippe Petit’s daring, illegal high-wire routine performed between New York’s World Trade Center’s twin towers in 1974. The film skilfully interweaves interviews with archival and reconstructed footage

- **Made in Dagenham** (2010; dir: Nigel Cole; editor: Michael Parker)
  What lessons can the documentary film editor learn from the dramatic structure of a feature film? We looked at this film to identify the protagonist of a story, their motivations and the development of antagonistic forces

- **Touching The Void** (2003; dir: Kevin McDonald; editor: Justin Wright)
  The true story of two climbers and their perilous journey up the west face of Siula Grande in the Peruvian
Andes. This feature-length documentary uses interviews, reconstruction and atmospheric footage and music to tell a gripping story

- **The Cutting Edge** (2004; dir: Wendy Apple; editors: Daniel Loewenthal, Tim Tobin)
  Documentary about the history of film editing and the importance of the editor's role, featuring famous American directors such as Steven Spielberg and Quentin Tarantino and their key collaborators Walter Murch, Sally Menke, Thelma Schoenmaker and many more

- **The Snowman** (2009; dir: Juliet Lamont; editor: Melanie Sandford)
  This feature-length documentary is a personal exploration by the director of her father's journey into madness. We looked at how the film - edited by Melanie - creates tension, empathy and dramatic structure from observational documentary and archival material

- **My Positive Life** (2008; dir: Wai Mar Nyo; editor: Myo Min Khin)
  A YFS NGO film cut by local editing mentor Myo Min Khin about the sensitive topic of a man's personal journey after he discovers he is HIV positive

*Before this workshop, when I watched a movie ... I didn't notice the editing. Now I'm learning to edit I realise it's quite hard to edit a film smoothly without letting the audience know that's what you're doing!*  
  *Lin Hnin Aye, Beginner student & Introduction to Documentary Editing participant*

4. Outcomes

Students taking part in the 2012 Introduction to Documentary Editing Workshop were astonishingly quick to grasp the technical aspects of editing. Although none had ever touched an Apple computer before, they displayed no fear of contact with the new working medium. Most students were completely relaxed working with each other and also with the international tutor and this helped to build a relationship of trust. Lessons were open and lively. Those who came across any kind of technical difficulties during the hands-on exercises were supported in their own language by Student Trainer Myo Min Khin and Student Technical Support Hnin Ei Hlaing when the international tutor was not immediately available.

*It's been really helpful in this workshop to have local trainers ... The international tutor shares her international experience and the local trainers explain things to us by using the local context or by revealing their own experiences ... It's a good combination.*  
  *Shunn Lei Swe Yee, Beginner director & Introduction to Editing participant*

However, it took students much longer to understand the philosophical and storytelling aspects of film editing. Two editing exercises which were solved instinctively by last year's students on the same workshop proved extremely challenging to the 2012 intake. This confirmed once again how much more there is to editing than simply understanding the technical side. Participants battled their way through observational footage trying to build up little sequences which showed more than merely a chronology of events. They were impressed by the efforts of students who managed to create emotion in their cuts; they were also confident in arguing about the structure of sequences which didn't work at all.

*You can learn such a lot from watching the screenings of the different edits and hearing the feedback from the students and tutors. I think the screenings are invaluable.*  
  *Khin Myanmar, YFS editor and Beginner in 2011*

As in previous years, screenings and discussions of edited exercises were tremendously fruitful for all participants. A wide range of issues related to editing (ethics, honesty, copyright) were raised during these
discussions and helped the students understand the many challenges facing a film editor. Although the three editing exercises were quite challenging for the participants of this year’s Workshop, individual feedback sessions with the international and local tutors revealed how much each student had enjoyed gaining an insight into the art of documentary film editing. Many revealed that they wanted to continue learning how to edit.

Since the participants were all quite new to filmmaking and particularly to documentary when they joined the Workshop, special attention was paid to introducing them to a wide range of films and approaches to storytelling. The students greatly appreciated gaining an insight into the role of good film editing - as evidenced by the lively post-screening discussions.

5. Evaluation

All the students advanced their storytelling skills during the workshop. They also learnt the importance of having good coverage of their topic as well as good sound. This means no matter which specialism they choose to pursue in filmmaking in future, this workshop will have been an invaluable learning experience for all involved. Most of the students showed an aptitude for editing. They were enthusiastic and diligent and exhibited a commitment to the course that extended beyond normal classroom hours, often working long into the night. Thankfully, it was possible to offer residential places on this course so participants from outside Yangon could stay on site at the workshop venue. Four students in particular exhibited a pronounced ability: Soe Kyaw Tin Htun displayed a keen sense of humour and his ability to think for himself and experiment with the material was clearly evident. Linn Hnin Aye demonstrated she can be very imaginative and intelligent in her use of images and sound. David Kyaw Thet Aung and Zin Mar Oo both displayed a natural talent for editing.

Under tutelage from the international tutor Melanie Sandford, editing student Khin Myanmar from the 2011 cohort was able to advance her editing techniques considerably. She spent at least an hour a day with Melanie discussing topics, ideas and the use of music as well as different approaches to the material. In particular, she learnt to identify themes and ways of handling material using a more essayistic approach. She also learnt different ways of using the paper edit to move sequences around. Having the chance to work on the filmed evaluations of the 2012 Beginners’ Workshop meant this student’s confidence in the editing room noticeably grew.

The international tutor was ably supported throughout the course by YFS Workshop Supervisor Hnin Ei Hlaing who is herself an editor, as is Student Trainer Myo Min Khin. Their assistance was a boon. Myo Min Khin taught the course alongside the international tutor, taking charge of basic training, acquainting the novice editing students with workflow, software and handling of equipment. Training YFS graduates to pass on their skills is both invaluable and underlines YFS’ commitment to preparing for local handover. Burmese trainers have the advantage of teaching in Burmese and can respond swiftly to new editors’ needs.

You’ll only become a good camera person if you know something about editing.

David Kyaw Thet Aung, Beginner cameraman & Introduction to Editing participant

(i) Recommendation

Next year, it would be helpful if the students of the Advanced Camera and Sound workshops could shoot at least two films which could be edited during the subsequent Introduction to Editing Workshop. The Introduction to Editing Workshop is in need of more material shot on HD to allow students to gain more experience in this new format. Purposely shot material would be beneficial in order to help new students learn how to edit a film.
I have empathy now for the editors in our Beginners’ Workshop! We shot masses of material but I’ve only started to understand now which images are actually useful … This workshop has taught me that images need to be meaningful and well focused with good exposure if they are to be usable in the edit.

Shun Lei Swe Yee, Beginner director & Introduction to Editing participant

I’ve come to realise that technical know-how in not the most important thing. Editing is all about the idea.

Soe Moe Aung, Beginner director & Introduction to Editing participant

X Ways of Seeing: the History of Film Technique and Style

A two week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 8 - 21 October 2012

Report by YFS Film History Tutor Frances Calvert

1. Aims

This course offered film practitioners a language with which to think and talk about their craft and art, describing how they ‘read’, analyse and understand films; in other words, cineliteracy. By the end of this course, they were better skilled at watching, describing and explaining how films work.

I was very happy to join the film history course because it taught me the roots of what I’m interested in. I’ve been able to see how things developed, how previous filmmakers tried things without enough equipment, and the difficulties they faced … I’ve come to realise that if they managed it with so few facilities, we should be able to as well.

Tun Lynn, YFS Beginner 2011

2. Participants

The course was open to all YFS students, particularly those who had not taken any previous Film History courses. The eleven participants included as many of the 2012 cohort who were able to continue staying on in Yangon following the Beginners’ and Introduction to Editing Workshops (seven in total) plus screenwriters Kyaw Swar Hein and Anna Biak Tha Mawi alongside students from the 2011 cohort.

3. Methodology

This course was developed with practicing filmmakers in mind, hence it proceeded from the practicalities of camera, composition, editing, sound, and so on, rather than illustrating film history in a slavishly chronological way. At the start of students received a course outline and dossier of stills illustrating many of the topics to be covered. Film clips illustrating the topics, film form and style and themes were screened as appropriate during the classroom teaching. Students used their newly acquired analytical skills to supply detailed analyses of both the clips and stills. Every evening entire films were screened including Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin; Fellini’s La Strada; a selection of films directed by Alfred Hitchcock; The House is Black, a short documentary from 1963 set in a leper colony in northern Iran; Chris Marker’s time travel film poem constructed entirely out of stills La Jetée; Rodgers and Hammerstein’s The King and I for a look at mid-20th century Hollywood’s depiction of Asia; Akira Kurosawa’s Ran; Blackboards directed by female Iranian filmmaker Samira Makhmalbaf and Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame directed by her sister Hana Makhmalbaf.
The teaching method was very good. It’s not like what is done here in Myanmar with a very exam-oriented approach. We were first shown films and then things were explained to us.

_Han Lin Twin, YFS Beginner 2012_

4. Content

Supported by still photographs and film clips, the course looked at the following topics:

**Cinematography**
Realism and Expressionism; different shot sizes and angles; lighting and colour; the use of lenses, filters, stocks and opticals (including Hitchcock’s mattes). Clips included material from early film - the Lumière Brothers, Méliès - and the cinematographer’s style (looking at Freund, Toland, Storaro) plus how cinematography supports narrative in film including works by Griffith, Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Murnau, Ruttmann, Ozu, Kurosawa, John Ford, Fritz Lang, Carol Reed, Orson Welles, the Italian neo-realists, Ingmar Bergman, the French New Wave, Oliver Stone, Godard, Soy Cuba and Warhol.

_This is a really important course for a camera person like me. If we can understand film history we will be able to make better films and create more emotion in every frame we shoot._

_David Kyaw Thet Aung, YFS Beginner 2012_

**Mise-en-scene**
The frame; composition; space and positioning patterns. Some background introduction to composition in classical western art was necessary and we looked at reproductions of works by Leonardo da Vinci, Titian and Caravaggio. The class was then divided into three groups to deliver very satisfactory analyses of mise-en-scène in Fritz Lang’s _M_. We also discussed mise-en-scène in films by Bunuel, Truffaut, Hitchcock, Polanski, Antonioni, Kubrick, Malcolm McLaren and Baz Luhrmann.

**Movement**
This section of the course looked at technical distortions of movement; proxemic patterns (the space between characters) with reference to Charlie Chaplin’s _Gold Rush_ versus _City Lights_ alongside Carl Dreyer’s _Passion of Joan of Arc_, Ingmar Bergman’s _Persona_, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly’s _Singin’ in the Rain_, and _On the Waterfront_ directed by Elia Kazan.

**Composition**
We discussed the composition of individual shots in films as varied as Josef von Sternberg’s _The Blue Angel_, John Ford’s _Stagecoach_, Orson Welles’ _Citizen Kane_ and _THX 1138_ directed by a young George Lucas.

**Editing - Montage**
This section analysed seamless editing in contrast to Soviet editing and looked at clips from films by D. W. Griffith; Soviet montage including Eisenstein’s _Battleship Potemkin_, _Alexander Nevsky_ and _Ivan the Terrible_; French New Wave jump cuts in Jean-Luc Godard’s _Breathless_ and the editing style in Franco Zeffirelli’s _Romeo and Juliet_.

**Sound**
Students had requested an intensive session devoted to sound and this was held as an all-day seminar to enthusiastic reception. Topics included the historical background to sound and a discussion of the first ‘talkie’ _The Jazz Singer_; _The Blue Angel_; the films of Ernst Lubitsch; sound effects in the films of Robert Bresson; the use of music in Francis Ford Coppola’s _Apocalypse Now_; songs such as the Grieg melody in Fritz Lang’s _M_; and
spoken language which broadened out into an interesting discussion about dubbing versus subtitling. The afternoon was spent analysing Prokoviev’s leitmotivs in Eisenstein’s *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible* and Bernard Herrmann’s leitmotivs in Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*. The students were encouraged to create their own sound or music for Joris Ivens’ poetic short documentary *Rain* and the results are keenly awaited.

**Documentary**

This seminar discussed fact versus fiction with particular reference to the films of Robert Flaherty and Dziga Vertov; Grierson and the British school; television; mixed documentary forms such as Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* and Peter Greenaway’s portrait of the artist John Cage; an afternoon was devoted to the creative documentary.

**Analysis of an historically significant film: Citizen Kane**

Towards the end of the course the above categories were reviewed and applied to an intensive analysis of Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*. Students were split into three groups, each of which gave presentations on different aspects of the film. These presentations were assessed and the students’ understanding deepened by further questioning from the tutor and class regarding style and form.

5. **Assessment**

To check their understanding and reinforce learning undertaken during the course, participants took a multiple choice written test on the final day. Every student passed. They remarked afterwards that they could not have absorbed so much knowledge about film language by watching films themselves and expressed gratitude for the insights gained.

*Film history is important to anyone who wants to be a filmmaker. We need to know how films have been made internationally and how the form has developed ... The film history course has been very useful.*

*Soe Moe Aung, YFS Beginner 2012*

**XI How Fiction Films Work: an Introduction to Film Analysis**

A two week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 19 November - 1 December 2012

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen

1. **Rationale for the Course**

The idea of the course was to give emerging filmmakers the ability to distinguish between different editing methods in fiction film and to understand how editing can be used to build a film’s intensity. The course was an introduction to understanding - by observing and analysing - emotion, form, structure, dramaturgy and content. The main goal of the course was the development of individual, creative thinking based on experience.

2. **Participants**

The analysis course was open to all YFS students. There were 12 participants altogether: seven female and five male students and two tutors.
Most of the 2012 Beginners were obliged to support themselves and their families by working elsewhere and were unable to remain in Yangon after a full summer of workshops, and so unfortunately only one participant - Lin Hnin Aye - was from this year's new cohort. We had two screenwriting students in the group: Kyaw Swar Hein came to YFS via the 2012 Beginners' Screenwriting Workshop and Chin writer Anna Biak Tha Mawi has already participated in several YFS workshops including last year's Documentary Editing Analysis course. Three filmmaking students from 2011 - Zaw Naing Oo, Khin Myanmar and Sai Nyi Nyi - had also taken part in the documentary film analysis course and were joined this year by Muslim student War War Hlaing. In addition we had cinematographer Tin Win Naing who had recently returned to Yangon from political exile; YFS editor Hnin Ei Hlaing; the artists and film directors Waimar Nyunt and The Maw Naing; and one participant, Nandar Win, who had joined the course after training at MRTV4’s Myanmar Media Development Centre (MMDC). The size of the group was ideal; moreover, since there were not so many male students the women were much more vocal than in previous years. The difference between the Beginners and more advanced students was marked but did not jeopardise the overall level of discussions and I think that in small groups everybody learned from each other. The collaboration between different students worked well.

The screenwriter, author (and medical doctor) Aung Min worked as my assistant tutor. This was the first attempt during a film analysis course to begin to hand over teaching to Burmese trainers. Aung Min led all the discussions in Burmese and these were translated simultaneously to me. The system worked well and saved time because nobody had to wait for a translation and the students were able to express themselves in their own language. Aung Min also followed the group work and gave advice where needed. He went through my handouts with the students and once again saved us having to translate everything. I was able to follow Aung Min’s teaching via simultaneous translation and became confident in his ability to convey course content accurately and respond to student needs.

3. Methodology and Content

The course was delivered via a combination of lectures, screenings, group work, discussions and presentations taught in two six-day weeks.

The first topic for analysis was emotion. We placed over a hundred stills on the table and the students were asked to think about their own current or recalled emotions and relate these emotions to certain photographs. The chosen images were then analysed and discussed in order to discover to what extent their individual emotions were also universal. After this exercise I gave a talk about the fundamental laws of human perception.

We then screened David Lynch’s The Straight Story (USA, 1999) edited by Mary Sweeney, and the participants discussed their emotional responses to the film. Prior to the discussion, the students noted down their own individual experiences of watching the film. I felt that the students’ ability to take note of their emotions and talk about them was much stronger than in previous courses. Students in the group who had participated in last year’s documentary editing analysis course proved to be a boon for the less experienced and Aung Min led all the discussions in Burmese and these were translated simultaneously to me. The system worked well and saved time because nobody had to wait for a translation and the students were able to express themselves in their own language. Aung Min also followed the group work and gave advice where needed. He went through my handouts with the students and once again saved us having to translate everything. I was able to follow Aung Min’s teaching via simultaneous translation and became confident in his ability to convey course content accurately and respond to student needs.

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The third theme of the course was different approaches to reading a film. I talked about the different levels of meaning and the basic components of film language. The difference between a film’s plot and its theme was subsequently discussed, first in small groups and then together in the classroom. I then showed the class a timeline structure of *The Straight Story* as an example for the analysis exercises which were to follow.

Three more films were screened, each of them twice, and the same method of group work and whole-class discussions was used. The films were: *The Son* (France, 2002) directed by the Dardenne brothers and edited by Marie-Hélène Dozo; *The Hours* (USA, 2002) directed by Stephen Daldry and edited by Peter Boyle and finally, *All About my Mother* (Spain, 1999) directed by Pedro Almodovar and edited by José Salcedo. Between the screenings I discussed the different structural alternatives offered by these film examples.

I then divided the students into three groups. During the second week, these groups were given three days to create a detailed analysis of their chosen film and prepare a summary. They were asked to assess the contribution of each scene to the whole film and also describe the film’s structure. In addition, they had to create a timeline of the characters, themes, plot points and areas which were especially interesting in the film they were analysing.

Each group was given one day to present their chosen film. The more advanced students in particular did a great job and their presentation was vivid and interesting.

By the end of the course, everybody had seen each film three times. During the first viewing we analysed our emotional responses; after a second viewing we discussed what happened in the film: did the characters experience a learning curve? What was the theme and possible message? Finally, we listened to each group’s presentations after viewing the film a third time, scene by scene. This meant that each group watched their own film four times. Although this is a demanding course, I feel that the participants were convinced that careful analysis of films will prove invaluable when they are making and editing their own work.

4. **Recommendations**

Watching and analysing films carefully is a very important aspect of learning the craft of filmmaking and is something you can only learn by doing over and over again. Two of the suggestions mentioned below (1 and 3) have already been attained. I am confident that, in a year or two at most, these analysis courses can be led by Burmese teachers autonomously.

1. More advanced YFS students such as Pe Maung Same, The Maw Naing and screenwriter Aung Min are mature filmmakers who are now in a position to lead discussions with younger students. My suggestion would be for participants to select a film in groups of two or three and take a week to create an analysis of the film in question, guided if need be by Pe Maung Same, The Maw Naing and Dr Aung Min. These groups can then come together, screen the films and each group present their results to the others. I would suggest one week for preparation and one and half days for presentation of films.

2. In addition to the analysis of a film in terms of structure and emotion, this analysis course could also be done from the point of view of cinematography, sound design and other specific aspects for those students who are editing.

3. Similar analysis courses could be offered for documentary, accompanied by lectures on different styles within the documentary genre.
XII  Advanced Editing Clinic II

A four week mentorship held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 2 December 2012 to 7 January 2013

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen

1.  Participants and Methodology

After the Editing Analysis Course, I held another Editing Clinic for the more advanced students. The Clinic was divided by Christmas into two parts and lasted around a month in total. The students were instructed to book an appointment with me in order to screen their footage or the edited version of whatever stage their project had reached.

All the students edited their films during the Clinic at the YFS house. Aung Nwai Htway (Ko Nwai) worked on the international version of Behind the Screen; Khin Myanmar completed her edit of Touching the Light (previously The Blind School); Hnin Ei Hlaing started editing her film about Myanmar pottery and Kyaw Myo Lwin worked on his long-postponed YFS Production Fund project Tyres. Myo Min Khin finalised Yangon by Night which was edited during the Beginners’ Editing Course tutored by Melanie Sandford and Myo Min Khin himself. In addition, The Maw Naing, Zaw Win Htwe, Tin Win Naing and Aung Min introduced their feature film project A Monk, which is a production outside of YFS.

2.  Individual Projects

Behind the Screen (international version)

Behind the Screen has been a long project overseen by three different mentors. It is a pity mentors can only stay in Burma for short periods and therefore do not have the possibility of overseeing the full editing process. I worked with Ko Nwai for six days during my first Advanced Editing Clinic in June 2012. He then worked with Melanie for five days in August.

The version of Behind the Screen for Burmese audiences had already screened – to great success – at the Wathann Film Festival in Yangon in September, where the film won Best Documentary. However, following discussions with Ko Nwai and YFS tutors, it was decided a second, slightly longer version should be produced to give international audiences more information on the story of the break-up between Ko Nwai’s film star parents.

During the second Clinic in December I watched the most recent version of Behind the Screen with Ko Nwai and we agreed that a problem had arisen from the decision to change the film’s point of view from his father to Ko Nwai himself. The idea was good in theory but when we compared the two versions we realised there was much more emotion when the father was included in the film. In the current version the emotion had been lost because Ko Nwai’s voiceover was off-screen and we couldn’t actually see anyone’s reactions. Removing most of the father’s interview also meant there were several different film-clips in succession with no break. This meant the film’s visual structure was not as interesting as in the Burmese version. We decided to bring the father back into the film so he could tell his story, and Ko Nwai’s voiceover could provide the son’s emotional response. We also tried to give the audience more breathing space by creating as many gaps as possible between the voiceovers.

In addition, we wanted to adjust the sound design and hoped a Burmese sound person could provide us with some new audience sounds but unfortunately none of them was available. After several attempts we were able to download YFS international sound tutor Ivan Horák’s pre-mix in Yangon and synch it to the film and there followed a series of complex online communications between YFS tutors in the Czech Republic, Germany and Australia and Ko Nwai and myself in Yangon. We all agreed this is not how sound design should be discussed but there was sadly no way for us to be in the same room at the time.
Yangon by Night

Yangon by Night was for a long time an interesting collection of footage but not yet a film until YFS tutor Melanie Sandford used the raw footage - all of which was shot before the recent political changes in Myanmar - as exercise material during the YFS Beginners’ Editing Workshop. The resulting film worked well and only required a few adjustments by YFS editor Myo Min Khin. Since the initial edit had been such a team effort we wanted to involve the Beginner editing students but they were unfortunately now dispersed throughout Myanmar. Myo Min Khin reordered a couple of scenes, clarified the opening and tightened things up without, I think, violating the editing students’ original ideas.

Tyres

Kyaw Myo Lwin is an editor who directed his first documentary film Tyres as a YFS Production Fund project. This documentary shows how old tyres are re-used as brushes and sandals and so on. The beautifully shot poetic black-and-white material, full of musical movements of the work, had been waiting to be edited for a year and a half. I think the edit had been postponed partly because editor Myo Min Khin has had to earn his living editing other films and partly because the material is visually so strong that everybody was expecting an extremely good result. Sometimes good material can cause a mental block in inexperienced filmmakers. At this point Myo Min Khin had decided to step down from the project because he did not want to delay the film any longer.

Kyaw Myo Lwin started to edit the film himself by thinking about the four main characters he had interviewed in colour. I advised him actually to consider the tyre as the film’s protagonist and to begin by following what happens to the tyre and then use the human characters more freely. He was very determined to have a final cut of the film before I left Yangon. I did not want to push him too much because my principle is that students need to take responsibility for their films and not leave it up to the tutor. Kyaw Myo Lwin did not manage to create a rough cut in the time we had scheduled together. (Update April 2013: YFS editor Myo Min Khin has since resumed work on the film).

Touching the Light (formerly The Blind School)

Touching the Light is Khin Myanmar’s editing exercise based on footage shot during the poetic documentary film course in 2010. The material was directed by Thiha Thwe with Thaiddhi as cinematographer. Our aim was simply to finalise Khin Myanmar’s cut (which she worked on during the first Clinic) but then Thiha suddenly showed up, wanting to give his input: his idea was to edit in such a way as to avoid showing the teachers and put the students at the centre. His ideas were very interesting and it would have been good for Khin Myanmar to have a director working alongside her to lift her cut above the natural storyline - which her own version mainly was. But sadly, his work as a video journalist meant he did not come back again and she edited the final version alone. The film does not have proper music yet, but I hope it will be used as a case study during a future sound design workshop.

Pottery Film (working title)

Hnin Ei Hlaing had shot material for a film about Myanmar pottery-making including some engaging interviews about the process alongside interesting glimpses into the personal lives of the potters. In spite of all her responsibilities as YFS Production Manager, she began a rough cut of the film. I introduced her to a new method of editing and she was enthusiastic about trying to keep the entire structure of the film in mind rather than editing separate sequences as she had done previously. She quickly realised that in this method the editing process begins with the very first images and when she is editing one scene she is already thinking about what will come next. Hnin Ei Hlaing is hard-working; she displays sensitivity towards the film characters, a good sense of humour and a fairly good grasp of structure. She is one of the most promising editors at YFS and I would like to see her edit more demanding projects. She completed a rough cut during the Clinic and I mailed her my feedback.
The Monk

The Monk is a low-budget feature film written by Aung Min, directed by The Maw Naing and shot by Tin Win Naing. During the Clinic they were in the middle of transferring the film’s data from memory cards. I met with them twice and talked about the process of editing a feature film and the cooperation between the editor and director. I was only able to see the material they shot in the delta. It was astonishingly beautiful. There is a documentary feel to it - in good sense - and the characters seem very natural. They told me they approached the scenes as documentary filmmakers and I think this brings a special uniqueness to the footage.

XIII YFS Screenwriting Competition

1. Rationale for the Competition

Having produced several short fiction films - and with two more in the pipeline for the True Fictions III Workshop in the winter of 2013 - YFS is now keen to produce a longer fiction film. This will offer current students and alumni the valuable experience of working together on a large scale, long-term docu-fiction project; it will also give the School the opportunity to raise its profile further via screenings at international film festivals and, it is hoped, in cinemas and on television. To this end, the School ran its inaugural Screenwriting Competition in the summer of 2012. The aim was to find a strong and engaging feature film idea which could be developed with the winning writer over the coming year into a full-length screenplay. YFS intends to use this script to seek production finance for its first feature film project.

2. Entries Received

In June 2012, a call went out on the YFS website and Facebook page for feature film ideas. Writers were asked to submit a 500 word synopsis, a 500 word statement of intent and a CV of their previous writing experience. Unfortunately - perhaps because such competitions are still a rarity in Myanmar - some writers misunderstood these entry requirements and YFS received more submissions of short film scripts than synopses for feature films.

YFS contacted all the writers who had submitted short scripts and asked them to resubmit. In addition, participants of the 2012 Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop were encouraged to submit ideas to the competition and each interested writer was given the opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion with the screenwriting tutor in order to develop their proposals.

YFS received a total of 11 entries to the Competition. Although we would have been happy to have received more, the quality of the submissions was generally high. The majority of the writers appeared keen to tackle important issues in Myanmar society, such as street children and drug addiction; the place of young women in a society in transition; the care for the elderly when traditional family structures are breaking down. There were also, however, some more light-hearted proposals with a couple of entries outlining a Burmese version of the typical Hollywood Rom-Com.

3. Judging

The ideas were sent to an international panel of judges including Ed Wethered, Head of Development at BBC Film in London; Marina Périllat, Cultural Project Coordinator at the Institut Français in Yangon; Sino-Burmese novelist Wendy Law-Yone; Burmese writers Dr Ma Thida and Nu Nu Yi; as well as the YFS Student Committee and YFS Director.
It was difficult to achieve a consensus amongst the judges but three clear favourites emerged:

(i) **Splash by Su Su Hlaing**
Watoke, 7, is a street kid making a precarious living collecting junk to support his grandma and himself. A gang of older boys get him addicted to glue and force him work for them. Life is increasingly bleak but then a female volunteer from the drop-in centre where Watoke used to hang-out tracks him down and helps him get off the glue. This proposal, written by talented journalist and participant of the 2012 Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop Su Su Hlaing, looks at the plight of street kids via a single young protagonist and was particularly popular amongst Burmese judges for its unflinching depiction of life on the streets of Yangon.

(ii) **Veins on Broken Wings by Aung Phyoe**
The story of two orphaned girls - Buddhist Khin Cho and Christian Anna - who grow up in a Christian orphanage and become very close. When Anna falls in love with a young man in the neighbourhood, Khin Cho is heartbroken. Anna becomes pregnant and is forced to leave the orphanage. Khin Cho has to decide what her path in life will be: to become a nun or venture out into the wider world. The proposal, by a writer previously unknown to YFS, is well written with a great eye for dramatic development of both characters. The judges felt this bodes well for the writer’s ability to write the screenplay of their idea.

*Update*: unfortunately, after announcing the results it emerged this idea was taken from a short story by another writer who did not want to participate in the competition. A discussion about rights and permissions will form part of the next YFS Screenwriting workshop.

(iii) **The Parcel by Anna Biak Tha Mawi**
Anna wrote the short screenplay about ‘parcel brides’ - young women sent abroad to marry men they have never met in order to bring money to their families - which was made into the short film *Bungkus* during the True Fictions II Workshop in 2010. She always intended to tell a longer version of this story which she wants to set in the picturesque mountains and valleys of her Chin homeland (*Bungkus* is set in Yangon). Her proposal gives a convincing dramatic account of this phenomenon which is prevalent in the poverty-stricken Chin State and which is becoming increasingly common throughout Southeast Asia.

4. **Next Steps**

Because the judges were unable to reach a consensus on a single winner, all three writers have been contacted and invited to work further on their submitted ideas. Su Su Hlaing and Anna are currently working on developing their 1-2 page proposals into a 12-20 page treatment of their stories. The writers will be paid a small development fee for this work and will receive email and face to face support by YFS screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews. In the autumn of 2013 the treatments will be read by the same judging panel as before and a single project chosen to be taken forward into a full screenplay later in 2013/2014.

XIV **YFS Documentary Competition**

In order to encourage YFS students from the cohorts 2007-2012 to develop new documentary projects of their own, the Yangon Film School launched a Documentary Competition in December 2012, which the Goethe Institute has kindly agreed to support. A Call was issued via the school’s website and Facebook pages, and members without regular access to the internet were also contacted individually. The Competition rules, which were discussed with the YFS Committee, stipulate that candidates could identify topics of their own choosing but that a maximum of ten projects will be accepted for the Competition. Crews should comprise YFS members. A budget of 300,000 Myanmar kyats (255 EUR) per film would be supplied, and equipment would be provided by YFS. Filming must be completed by the end of June 2013 so that projects can be edited by YFS Student Editors under the aegis of international mentors during an Editing Workshop in mid-2013.
Update April 2013: a total of ten written documentary proposals have now been received. Topics range from portraits of fisherfolk eking out a living in coastal Mon State or on the wetlands of Mo Yun Gyi wildlife sanctuary; to films about individualists, such as an eccentric troubadour-cum-political-activist who wanders the countryside in Bago Division, and a bachelor-poet who ponders the fledgling democracy in his country. Students have also sought to examine in their films the harrowing effects of enslavement, or of prolonged armed conflict on ordinary people in Karen and Kachin States, or to take a look at the harsh lives of mine workers in Mogoke’s notorious ruby extraction industry.

XV YFS Annual Screening

On Sunday, 2 December 2012, the Yangon Film School held its outdoor Annual Screening at the House of Memories on U Wisara Road in Kamaryut Township. Opened this year by Mr Andreas List, Head of the European Union Office in Myanmar, this popular event was attended by a diverse audience of over 100 people, including diplomats and members of the international development community, but also local capacity building and civil society organisations and NGOs, journalists, media workers, filmmakers, artists and writers, as well by students, their families and even some of the films’ protagonists. The 2012 screening also marked the first time that members of the local press including Independent News Journal, Myanmar Times and The Voice, and media (MRTV4) were invited. After conducting interviews with YFS students, several articles appeared. In addition, approximately 50 copies of individual YFS films and DVD compilations were sold during the event.

The event began by screening all four final film assignments filmed by the 2012 cohort of students during the 2012 Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop. Echoing the Yangon Heritage Trust’s bid to save some of the city’s magnificent colonial buildings, the theme for the Beginners’ Workshop this year was ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People who live in them’: in Zin Mar Oo’s My Grandfather’s House, Thakin Htein Win’s granddaughter reminisces about the old wooden house where she grew up - a house which was once the meeting place for the architects of Burma’s independence movement, in which her grandfather played a pivotal role; Soe Moe Aung’s Insein Rhythm takes a witty look at the sights and sounds of a local railway station in Yangon’s Insein township - but a stone’s throw away from one of the country’s most infamous prisons; Cho Phyone and her crew take us behind the crumbling façade of one of Yangon’s best known colonial buildings at No. 62, Pansodan Street to observe some of the people who call this rambling building home and, finally, Thet Oo Maung meets the elderly Indian owner of a once thriving photographic studio in The Old Photographer. Once again, the filmmakers of all the Beginners’ films were introduced on stage and fielded questions from the audience about their work.

The first film after the interval was More than a Tree, an impressively photographed 15-minute documentary that INGO Malteser International had commissioned YFS to make about how mangroves are supporting community resilience in Rakhine State. Taking the stage briefly to introduce the work, Malteser International’s Roland Hansen, said it was: “good to feature a film that captures shared community responsibility towards achieving a common goal, since it provides some hope for a true reconciliation in Rakhine.”
The evening’s film programme was rounded off by Bungkus, a ‘true fictions’ film produced by YFS in 2010. Set in the Chin community of Yangon, the story follows Zing Zing, whose tenderly flowering relationship with local boy Asang is threatened when her mother decides she must become a ‘parcel’ bride. The film’s end is inspired by a real-life tragedy within the Chin community. Although the film’s screenwriter admitted that Bungkus - the first fictional film ever to be made in Hakha Chin - may feel more like a sketch for a longer fictional work (and she is indeed currently developing a feature-length screenplay), the film was nonetheless warmly received by the audience. After the screening, the film’s crew and cast of non-professionals came on stage to talk about the challenges of filming in Hakha Chin with a largely non-Chin-speaking crew.

The evening proved to be a resounding success with audience and students alike; it is particularly encouraging to see how students are becoming more proficient at finding the words to describe their work as cineastes. The fact that many Burmese members of the audience chose to stay on after the screenings to talk to filmmakers and guests reflects the growing acceptance for engaging films that reflect the realities of people’s lives in Myanmar.

XVI Direct Results of YFS Workshops and Activities in 2012

1. Visible outcomes

In 2012, YFS participants took part in, produced or completed:

a) Three residential workshops
b) Four non-residential workshops
c) Two ‘Clinic’-style workshops
d) Two mentorships
e) Ten short documentaries and exercises by novice directors, five of which focus on the topic of ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People who Live in Them’
f) One second-year student film (Touching the Light, edited by Khin Myanmar),
g) One YFS Production Fund work (Behind the Screen, 38’), a personal documentary about the filmmaker’s parents, who were both once famous screen actors.
h) One collective work completed: (Yangon by Night, 42’) an observational ‘portmanteau’ film shot by several YFS crews in pre-thaw Yangon in 2009 and edited, also by teams of different students, during the 2012 Introduction to Editing Workshop.
i) Two documentary commissions: More than a Tree and Puppets Beyond Borders.

All the workshop films, as well as a film about the 2012 YFS workshops - which includes comments from both participants and tutors - will be available on the Yangon Film School DVD: ‘Old Buildings in Yangon and the People who Live in Them’ to be released in May/June 2013. Other films from 2012 will be released on single DVDs.

2. Benefits for Target Group

- Participants acquire media skills that are becoming increasingly valuable in a changing political environment and growing marketplace
• Students work with peers from different ethnic groups and social and economic backgrounds and learn to overcome prejudice

• Members of marginalised ethnic and religious groups are involved in a creative activity that delivers solid skills and helps them gain confidence

• Management staff receive training in specific skills needed to work as a team to manage a film school and production outfit and are exposed to good business and management practices in preparation for handover of YFS to local Myanmar nationals

• Students are exposed to a variety of cinematic styles and are able to develop their own individual identities as filmmakers

• Unique opportunity to live and work alongside industry professionals from all over the world in a relaxed but structured atmosphere in which cultural barriers melt

• Positive psychological effects as participants take pride in their abilities, assume responsibility and acquire a deeper understanding of themselves, their immediate environment and the world at large

3. Dissemination of YFS Films

(i) Commissioned Projects

In 2012 the school’s production arm, Yangon Film Services, completed two commissions:

Made for the international non-governmental organisation Malteser International in a coastal community in Rakhine State, the strikingly photographed *More than a Tree* (15’36") describes the critical importance of mangrove restoration in reducing disaster risks aggravated by the changing environment; it also shows how the women of coastal villages in Rakhine in particular have become part of an eco-vision to protect and help their communities. YFS junior director Khin Myanmar teamed up with Malteser International’s Disaster Risk Reduction Coordinator Philipp Danao to direct; YFS cinematographer Aung Ko Ko provided the lush visuals and YFS sound recordist War War Hlaing the soundtrack. The film was edited by regular YFS editor Myo Min Khin.

*Puppets Beyond Borders*, (38’32”) which was made in cooperation with Meta House in Phnom Penh for the Goethe Institute in Jakarta, chronicles a cross-border puppet workshop in Thailand. At the end of 2011, puppeteers from Germany, France, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia came together at Chiang Mai venue ‘Empty Space’ in northern Thailand for a workshop led by German director Manuel Lutgenhorst. The groups were asked to create a new collaborative piece to be performed in Chiang Mai, Phnom Penh and Yangon, exploring the topic of ‘home’. Filmed by a Burmese-Cambodian crew and edited by YFS director-editor Hnin Ei Hlaing, *Puppets Beyond Borders* follows these Asian and European troupes as they prepare their pieces and encounter each other’s rich and diverse puppetry traditions – from shadow play to glove puppets and marionettes – and takes a look at the players’ innovative approaches to reinterpreting their art for today’s audiences. This film was premiered at the Goethe Institute-supported Meta House in Phnom Penh in March 2013.
(ii) Commissioned Work in 2012, New Commissions

The commissions mooted in the Annual Report in 2011 have not as yet come to fruition. In general, a lull in commissioning was noted for 2012. However, there was an increase in the number of YFS graduates making films independently of YFS for the development sector and other clients. This increase demonstrates how YFS capacity building is creating a cadre of trained, autonomous filmmakers. Commissions are nonetheless important for the school in terms of income generation and its future sustainability, and it will be necessary to look for other ways of cooperating with local NGOs. One approach could be for YFS filmmakers themselves to initiate projects for local NGOs for which YFS helps to secure funding.

Several Commissions currently (April 2013) in production or under discussion are:

- A documentary for Swiss MA student Carine Weiss about maternal health and the work of traditional birth attendants and trained midwives in rural Myanmar
- A series of films for the International Labour Organisation about forced labour issues
- A short film for International Rescue Committee about their partners’ livelihood projects in Lashio

(iii) Other Projects and Partnerships

During the conference ‘Towards a Better Future for Myanmar Movies’, held in Yangon from 1-2 December, members of the film producers’ association, Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation (MMPO) approached the YFS Director to ask if YFS would provide a Screenwriting Workshop for its members. This marked the first time that the MMPO had sought out assistance from YFS and reflects the growing impact that YFS’ training programmes are having throughout the film and media sector. A partnership between MMPO, YFS and the British Council has since been formed to bring YFS Screenwriting Tutor Rachel Mathews to Yangon in August to hold an Art of Screenwriting Workshop for a maximum of 16 industry practitioners.

Thanks to support from the British Embassy in 2012, two YFS students were able to continue attending British Council English-language classes in Yangon. It is not yet known whether further support will be forthcoming to help other YFS students to improve their English skills.

The YFS Director, who is a member of the Advisory Board for Wathann Film Festival (WFF), helped secure funding for this festival from the Goethe Institute Jakarta and medico international. She has suggested that festival’s organisers select a number of titles from DocNet SEA’s ChopShots film festival for screening during WFF in 2013 as part of the ChopShots Travelling Festival.

(iv) The YFS Production Fund, Independent Projects by YFS filmmakers

Inaugurated in 2009, the YFS Production Fund aims to support the production of ambitious independent projects and at the same time familiarise YFS students with international pitching and acquisition processes, encourage them to create budgets and contracts and handle their own productions according to industry norms and best practice.

Both Burmese and international versions of Production Fund project, Behind the Screen were completed in 2012. The Burmese version of the film won Best Documentary at the Wathann Film Festival in September 2012. YFS filmmaker Aung Nwai Htway displayed patience and diligence during the two often emotionally painful edits of his brave personal work. The film has been entered as a mid-length film to several film festivals. YFS is hopeful that this documentary will receive its international premiere at a major film festival in Europe.

In spite of input from YFS mentors, the translucently photographed black-and-white material of the YFS Production Fund documentary project Tyres languished for many months unedited during 2012. At the end of
the year, the film’s director Kyaw Myo Lwin admitted that he felt incapable of editing his own material. He approached YFS editor Myo Min Khin once more, who agreed to edit the film in between other assignments. At the beginning of 2013, YFS Director and YFS Committee decided to award the project an additional grant from the YFS modest Production Fund to enable Myo Min Khin to concentrate on creating a rough cut by May 2013. Encouraged by interest shown in the film by Ally Derks, International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam (IDFA) and programmer Raul Zampano during their recent visit to YFS in Yangon, YFS Director intends to apply to IDFA’s Bertha Fund for finance to meet the costs of finishing the edit and post-production of this film.

After working with YFS mentor Tuula Mehtonen in 2012, Shin Daewe is hoping to do some additional filming for her film The Collector in June 2013. YFS-filmmaker and trainer Pe Maung Same completed the edit of his film The River. Made with fellow YFS alumnus Tay Zar Win Tun, the film ponders the ruinous environmental and social consequences should the mooted Myitsone dam project go ahead. In the summer of 2012, The Maw Naing and YFS screenwriter Dr Aung Min filmed their first feature film A Monk. The film was shot in the Delta region and in Yangon by YFS cinematographer Tin Win Naing and is currently being edited.

(v) YFS Films at International Film Festivals and other Events

YFS films are in increasing demand at festivals around the world. The School is delighted that YFS filmmakers - many of whom have never travelled outside Myanmar before - are being given the opportunity to accompany their films to festivals in order to present their work and participate in seminars and Q&As. Such trips not only open up horizons for the individual filmmakers but also spread awareness about YFS and the Myanmar stories the School’s filmmakers are depicting during a period of rapid political and social change.

In February, the Lifescapes South East Asian Film Festival in Chiang Mai, Thailand, presented a group screening of YFS films from 2011: The Game (dir: Maung Okkar), The Bamboo Grove (dir: Khin Khin Hsu), Bungkus (dir: Lay Thida) and Burmese Butterfly (dir: Hnin Ei Hlaing). Maung Okkar, Lay Thida and Hnin Ei Hlaing accompanied their films to the festival and participated in a presentation about YFS. Also in February film festival favourite Charcoal Boy (dir: Maung Okkar, 2010) screened at the Dam Short Film Festival in Boulder City, Nevada.

YFS was delighted that the feature length documentary Nargis - when time stopped breathing won the FIPRESCI international Critics’ Award (its fourth accolade) at the Mumbai International Film Festival in February. The film’s mentor Ulrike Schaz and YFS filmmaker Pe Maung Same accompanied the film to Mumbai and also received the award. The judge’s assessment included the following statement:

It’s quite easy to shoot a post-natural disaster region - just go there, aim your camera, and start recording the miseries of the people affected ... But it’s not easy to create cinema out of it, giving those little sensitive touches that lift it above television features. Nargis - When Time Stopped Breathing ... scores exactly on that front ... For the viewer, it remains a story about humanity and hope, and not a story of some individual faces in a far-off, unknown place. It is a courageous film of lyrical beauty that transcends the drama of politics, society and people.  

Utpal Borpujari, member of the FIPRESCI judging panel, Mumbai, February 2012

In April, YFS filmmaker Sai Kong Kham travelled with his debut film Sweetie Pie to Visions du Réel in Nyon in Switzerland and to the Sehsüchte International Student Film Festival in Potsdam in Germany whilst Charcoal Boy went on tour throughout New Zealand with the Documentary Edge Festival.
In May and June, YFS filmmaker and Production Manager Hnin Ei Hlaing travelled with her film about the gay subculture in Yangon, *Burmese Butterfly*, to Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival in Germany and Frameline International LGBT Film Festival in San Francisco. The film played simultaneously in competition at Sheffield DocFest in the UK and was part of the Official Selection for the Médecins Sans Frontières Online Film Competition. It screened in San Francisco again in November at the Transgender Film Festival.

In June three YFS films - Shin Daewe’s portrait of the painter Rahula *An Untitled Life*, as well as *Charcoal Boy* and *Sweetie Pie* - screened at the Heart of Slovenia Film Festival. At the end of October YFS filmmaker Shin Daewe travelled to Denmark to present *Nargis - when time stopped breathing* at the Freedom Film Festival in Copenhagen where Lay Thida’s *Unreported Story* and Khin Khin Hsu’s *The Bamboo Grove* also screened. *Nargis* then went on to play at the Annual Myanmar Film Festival in Los Angeles. November saw *Sweetie Pie* screening at the Asiana (AISFF) International Competition in Seoul and *Burmese Butterfly* touring the Czech Republic as part of the Mezipatra Festival, whilst 2011 Beginner films *My Family*, *The Bag* and *Empty Nest* all screened at the World Film Festival in Bangkok.

In December 2011 Beginner Seng Mai’s film about the conflict in Kachin State *The Social Game* won runner-up prize in the Best SEA Short Documentary category at ChopShots Documentary Film Festival in Jakarta. *Sweetie Pie* and *Burmese Butterfly* also screened in competition at ChopShots which selected *Nargis - when time stopped breathing* as its opening film. The year was rounded off by *Burmese Butterfly* screening at the Anchorage International Film Festival in Alaska and *Sweetie Pie* at the Capalbio Cinema International Short Film Festival in Italy.

**(vi) YFS at Festivals in Myanmar**

**The Wathann Film Festival**

The Yangon Film School is delighted by the successful continuation of the Wathann Film Festival, founded in 2011 by YFS students Thu Thu Shein and Thaiddhi among others. The second edition of the Festival took place at Mahar Sanni Thukha Monastery in Tarmwe Township in Yangon from 5 to 9 September, 2012. Three YFS productions featured amongst the 20 films in competition: *Behind The Screen*, Aung Nwai Htway’s moving documentary about his film star parents; *The Dream*, a documentary about a determined Baptist preacher and the orphans in his care directed during the 2011 Beginners’ Workshop by Khin Myanmar; *Rain*, a short film which began life as discarded footage for the YFS NGO project *Rice: Towards A Better Future* and which was given new poetic shape by YFS editor Zaw Win Htwe. Two personal projects by YFS students were also in the competition: *Social Game*, 2011 Beginner Seng Mai’s innovative mix of filmed footage and stills from war-torn Kachin State; and *The Clinic*, directed by the trio of Ko Jeu, Aung Min and The Maw Naing about doctor and YFS-trained screenwriter Aung Min’s medical clinic in Yangon. There were also a number of competition films mentored by YFS-trained filmmakers, including *New Life*, a short documentary about a monk becoming a layman which emerged from a Mandalay filmmaking workshop run by Shin Daewe and Pe Maung Same. *Behind the Screen* was the popular and well-deserved winner of the Best Documentary Award.

‘A brave personal film, sensitively narrated by the filmmaker. Making skilful use of excerpts from his parents’ performances in what have since become classical works of Burmese cinema, he tells us their sad story, and in doing so these same extracts acquire a hitherto unseen, beautiful and deeply personal meaning.’  

*Wathann Film Festival Jury’s Citation on Behind the Screen, directed by Aung Nwai Htway*
The Wathann Film Festival also hosted the first ever public screening inside Myanmar of *Nargis - when time stopped breathing*, the feature length documentary shot under cover - and with great personal danger - in 2008 in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Nargis by YFS filmmakers Pe Maung Same, The Maw Naing, Thu Thu Shein, Tin Win Naing, Thaidhi, Kyaw Myo Lwin, Myo Min Khin, and Shin Daewe. The film was edited by Myo Min Khin with intensive mentoring and support from YFS tutors Ulrike Schatz, Stewart Young and Lindsey Merrison. The screening was packed with every seat filled and an overflow of people sitting on the steps of the auditorium. The audience applauded when interviewees in the film dared to speak out about the then-government’s failure to respond adequately to the humanitarian disaster following the cyclone in which it is estimated 140,000 people died and thousands more were left homeless and destitute. The film received a standing ovation at the end followed by a two minute silence for the cyclone victims and an intense Q&A session. YFS sold over fifty copies of the DVD of the film at cost price in the cinema foyer after the screening.

A successful sidebar of the festival was the Women in Film section featuring work by five YFS-trained female filmmakers: *The Merry Widows of Nam Mun* by well-established Myanmar fiction film director Kyi Phyu Shin; *Inspiring Women* by Lay Thida who recently secured a Fulbright Scholarship to study in the USA; *Happy Soul* by Wai Mar Nyunt who is currently completing her graduation project at the FAMU Film School in Prague; *The River* by Thu Thu Shein who is studying cinematography at FAMU; and *An Untitled Life* by Shin Daewe who has become a stalwart amongst the YFS local trainers and is currently editing *The Collector*, her documentary about the political changes over the last two decades. It was inspiring to see these five women standing together in front of a full auditorium to discuss their work and the challenges and rewards of being a female filmmaker in Myanmar. They fielded a series of questions from the audience – some of whose male members appeared to be a little wary of the talent and determination displayed by the women standing before them.

**Celebrating Myanmar’s Cinematic Heritage - the YFS Film Archive Project**

Another valuable aspect of the festival was the screening of a major cinematic work from Myanmar’s past: the fiction feature film *Tender Are the Feet* directed by Maung Wunna in 1972 and starring San San Aye, the mother of YFS filmmaker Aung Nwai Htway (she also features in his documentary *Behind the Screen*). YFS has since invested in working on the subtitles of this film - which tells the story of a dancer in traditional Burmese theatre torn between her love for a humble musician and a big-shot movie producer - with the intention of securing screenings at international film festivals. Whilst three decades of military dictatorship led to a sad decline in the quality of Myanmar film, there are other cinematic gems from the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. YFS is seeking to cooperate with the MMPO and MMPE to identify and secure prints, and find partners to help restore and subtitle some of these works to make them available once more to audiences within and outside of Myanmar.

**The 2nd Art of Freedom Film Festival**

YFS was also delighted to take part in the second edition of the Art of Freedom Film Festival, which took place at the Taw Win Centre from 29 to 31 January 2013. It was a pleasure to learn that *A Bright Future*, YFS filmmaker Shin Daewe’s 2009 work about child-centred teaching at Paung Daw Oo monastery school near Mandalay, received Best Documentary Award.

(vii) *Myanmar Television, Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise*

Following her short presentation about YFS training programmes during the MMPE / MMPO-organised seminar ‘Towards a Better Future for Myanmar Movies’ in Yangon on 1-2 December, 2012 the YFS Director was interviewed for MRTV4. The interview was broadcast repeatedly following the conference.

In March 2012, YFS Director Lindsey Merrison and Production Manager Hnin Ei Hlaing met Khin Maung Win and Khin Maung Saw, CEOs of broadcaster Democratic Voice of Burma. This broadcaster has on several occasions
transmitted YFS films without seeking prior permission. YFS Director informed both executives that whilst YFS is keen to broadcast its filmmakers’ work, DVB must ensure that good business practices and copyright are observed.

YFS intends to find more broadcast platforms for its work in Myanmar. A SEA DocNet meeting in Phnom Penh in March 2013 attended by two YFS alumni, Lwin Ko Ko Oo and Nyi Lynn Seck, who are now Commissioning Editors at government-owned Myanmar International and private station Channel Five television respectively, provided an excellent opportunity for the YFS Director and also YFS Committee Member Eh Mwee to forge links and discuss cooperation with local broadcasters. Myanmar broadcasters are in need of quality content for increasingly discerning Burmese audiences, but they must be willing support or co-produce such content with independent film producers, or purchase finished films.

(viii) Cooperation with International Media and Visitors to YFS

International media continues to take great interest in Myanmar. YFS is often one of the first ports of call for broadcasters, film producers, media journalists and international organisations involved in media training. In 2012 YFS was asked to provide researchers, fixers, crew members and/or trainers for the following productions and/or organisations:

- **Far East** An Asian road movie for Franco-German channels rbb/arte. In December 2012 YFS filmmaker Shin Daewe was ‘fixer’ for the Myanmar leg of this pan-Asian trip which also interviewed YFS Director Lindsey Merrison about the film school as part of the programme.

- **Anthony Bourdain’s Parts Unknown** YFS Beginner-Screenwriter and cookery journalist Cho Wut Yee and YFS cinematographer Mya Darli Aung supported the US crew during their filming of the Myanmar episode of this travel-and-cookery programme for CNN.

- **Along the Mekong Productions** YFS cinematographer-director Pe Maung Same and YFS sound recordist Sai Kong Kham spent several weeks assisting German filmmakers Bernd Girrach and Rolf Lambert during the production of a major three-part series for Germany’s Südwestrundfunk about the Ayeyarwaddy River and the people who live along, and on, Myanmar’s most famous waterway.

- **The BBC Trust** YFS has been asked to supply local trainers to assist the BBC’s Bill Hayden in capacity building at the country’s broadcast centre at Thakton in central Myanmar. The aim of this training is to facilitate MRTV’s transition from a state broadcasting channel to a public service broadcaster.

- In 2012, YFS received a steady stream of visitors at the YFS house on U Po Tet Road in Mayangone Township, including such well-known international industry figures as Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh, British producer *The Killing Fields* Lord David Puttnam, and director of the *International Documentary Festival Amsterdam* (IDFA) Ally Derks. Ally and Festival Programmer Raul Zampano presented IDFA’s multifarious activities to a group of around 20 YFS and other filmmakers.
XVII   Conclusions and the Next Steps

YFS Beginners’ and teach-to-train programmes continue to create capacity for filmmakers as both proponents and multipliers of filmmaking skills. In terms of content, the 2012 courses met the ongoing demand by introducing a new multiethnic intake to filmmaking and improving storytelling skills for all students through trainings in screenwriting, editing, film history and analysis. YFS’ training programmes also gave more experienced students the opportunity to work independently towards established goals and receive feedback during periodical mentorship sessions.

As the Yangon Film School enters its ninth year of activity, demand for a broad range of filmmaking training on the part of the school’s current and new students hailing from diverse ethnic groups remains unabated. The growing demand for media education makes the need for a permanent base, long-term funding, and a full-time curriculum leading to approved qualifications more pressing than ever. Management training, including a possible consultancy to help establish strategic planning goals must also be vigorously pursued in order to facilitate handover to locals within the foreseeable future. Study grants should also be introduced to enable students to attend on a full-time basis.

In order to improve the school’s outreach, a multi-year Travelling Cinema Project is planned. Its aim is to inform and engage rural audiences and recruit students from remote and rural areas through cinema screenings and introductory grass-roots workshops in video production. The target group is young people from marginalised and/or disadvantaged groups. A series of ‘rural testimonies’ to be filmed by YFS filmmakers during the travelling cinema project will provide a kind of video mapping of the country. These short films can be presented online and on TV and used as tools to inform urban Myanmar and MPs alike about the lives of the rural poor.

Cooperation with Myanmar’s broadcasting, film and development sectors, other media training projects as well as cross-media projects at home and abroad will help to consolidate YFS’ position as a ‘centre of excellence’. Such projects will also improve the free flow of information and support change and growth.

The continued success of the YFS model - now attracting increasing attention far beyond Myanmar’s borders - serves to confirm the growing role that this capacity building project is playing in the country’s transition to a democratic society.

1. Assessments and Suggestions

• In order to achieve greater diversity of applicants and sustain their involvement, a Travelling Cinema Project is planned. Its aim is to inform and engage rural audiences and recruit students from remote and rural areas through cinema screenings and introductory grass-roots workshops in video production.

• YFS will continue to approach the government in order seek support for its vision of a permanent school. The school’s membership of the Media Development Thematic Working Group advising the government on the development of a new Media Law will enable the school to table discussion topics that will affect its own status as a training centre. Government cooperation for the school’s Travelling Cinema and Cinema Heritage projects will also be sought.

• The search for a permanent school site must also be pursued vigorously.

• The school will supply the government body responsible for the film industry, MMPE, with an overview of its training programmes for 2013. The school does not expect to have to submit an application for permission to hold its trainings.

• By forging links with universities and private schools in order to present its work to young people and other educators, YFS will raise awareness for well-made local documentaries and fictional works that
tell stories about people from diverse sections of society, thereby reducing prejudice and promoting reconciliation.

• Wider channels of distribution in Myanmar and beyond must be sought for YFS films through broadcast TV, cinema, DVD distribution, social media and VOD.

• Cross-media Partnerships must be sought with local NGOs as well as other players in the development, cultural, educational and arts sectors

• English lessons in partnership with the British Council / British Embassy must be sought for students and management team members.

• Cooperation with other international training programmes: YFS trainers and films should continue to be used by other media trainers (BBC, Deutsche Welle, IMS)

• Cooperation with other film schools such as FAMU and the Film Academy Ludwigsburg and study trips abroad for outstanding students should be pursued, as should participation at local and international film festivals and conferences. Students would benefit from additional training in Project Pitching and seminar presentation skills for such occasions.

• Cooperation with SEA partners in the Goethe Institute’s EU-funded SEA DocNet, of which YFS is a partner, is sought, as well as throughout the ASEAN region, in order to promote exchange between Myanmar filmmakers and their colleagues in the region

• As of 2013, YFS will resume its policy of biennial rather than an annual intake of beginners. This will allow Second Year students to develop their skills by creating individual projects and taking part in other training programmes specialising on other genres and certain aspects of filmmaking.

• Additional funding must be secured to ensure inclusion of study grants for needy students

• In 2013, on-site and E-training Management Training that also includes proposal writing will continue the process of transition to a local-run entity. A consultancy during a planning exercise with the YFS Committee and management team would help identify strategic goals for the school.

• The school needs to identify more students willing to take on the role of producer. Individual students should be mentored as they develop contractual, grant-writing and production management skills and also learn to deal with local and foreign clients

2. Workshops in 2013

An Art of Documentary Editing Workshop for twenty YFS filmmakers and Student Editors is scheduled to take place in mid-2013. The aim of this training programme is to enable editors and directors to learn to work together to shape the ten YFS Documentary Competition entries to international standards within a six-week time frame. Participants are required to prepare their film material by ordering, transcribing and translating and creating an assembly prior to the beginning of the workshop. Directors will be asked to take on the role of director-producers and assist during the paper edit and edit but also furnish all required documentation including consent forms, music cue sheets, clearances and a list of film credits.

A True Fictions III Workshop will be prepared for from June to September and then held in October, November and December 2013. Four short scripts selected from the 2012 Beginners’ Screenwriting Workshop are currently being developed and will reach shooting script stage in June 2013. At that point, YFS students will be invited to confirm their participation in the True Fictions III Workshop and state which role they would prefer to fulfil. The students will be divided into two crews of ten/twelve people each with more experienced students being given head of department roles (camera, sound, directing, producing, editing) and beginner students being assigned training roles within their chosen specialisation. The two crews will select one script each out of the four available and the producer and director will work with the screenwriter to fine tune the story. Further development of both projects will be overseen by YFS screenwriting and directing
tutor Rachel Mathews in Yangon in August 2012. The crews will be left to work independently throughout September scouting for locations, finding non-actors to play the roles, scheduling the shoots and finalising the budgets.

The Workshop proper will begin in October 2012 with an intensive two week training period in making fiction films with a documentary aesthetic. The workshop will be informed by the work of the Dardenne brothers (Rosetta, The Son, The Kid With the Bike, The Silence of Lorna) renowned proponents of this type of filmmaking. It will be led by international tutors supported closely by local mentors taken from the pool of YFS trained tutors. The two films will be shot over a two week period in November and will then be edited for six weeks in November and December. As well as tutoring up to 24 YFS students in the techniques of fiction filmmaking and producing two high-quality short fiction films which can then be submitted to worldwide festivals, a key objective of this ambitious and lengthy workshop is to integrate the different cohorts within the YFS and to allow more experienced students to pass on their knowledge to the School’s newer intake. This should help to secure a focused, well-trained and experienced student body which will stand YFS in good stead for future projects such as the production of the School’s first feature fiction film (of which the 2012 Screenwriting Competition is the first step) as well as NGO commissions and more personal film projects - both documentary and fiction - from YFS members.

The True Fictions III Workshop will cover the following key areas of filmmaking:

- Screenwriting including finalising a script with input from the director and producer
- Producing including script development, budgeting, scheduling, contracts, release forms, overseeing a production from development through production to post-production
- Directing including script development, casting, location scouting, directing (non)actors, working with a crew, working with an editor and overseeing post-production
- Camera including working with a fiction director and (non)actors, lighting scenes, shooting action, working with a camera assistant
- Sound recording including sync-sound, use of boom and radio mics, working with a sound assistant, recording non-actors
- Fiction film editing including working with a director, taking notes from a producer, working with an editing assistant
- Sound design including track laying, working with a fiction film director and producer, deciding upon music and working with a composer and musicians
- Post-production including colour grading, subtitling, titles and credits, the online edit

Both workshops will include parallel ‘train-to-teach’ programmes for Student Trainers and Editors.

Funds permitting, YFS’ 2013 activities may also include:

- A post-production training module
- A Sound Design training module
- Editing Clinics and/or mentorships
- The mentoring of the two ideas selected from the Screenwriting Competition into treatments and the further mentoring of one selected treatment into a full-length feature film script
- Guest Lecturers
### TABLE 1 - Breakdown of YFS Participants in 2012 by Gender, Ethnicity & Religion

<table>
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<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Participant Breakdown</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Joined YFS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Management Course</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5 F (female) 2 M (male) 4 Myanmar 1 Myanmar-Chinese 1 Rakhine 1 Rakhine-Muslim</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 F</td>
<td>6 Buddhist</td>
<td>1 2005 1 2006 1 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May to 8 June (10 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 M</td>
<td>2 M</td>
<td>1 Muslim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2 F 1 M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 Myanmar</td>
<td>3 Buddhist</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 June to 8 July (12 days)</td>
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<td>1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese</td>
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<td>6 F 6 M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 Myanmar</td>
<td>10 Buddhist</td>
<td>11 2012 1 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 July to 4 September (36 days)</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>1 F 11 M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 Myanmar</td>
<td>11 Buddhist</td>
<td>8 2012 2 2011 2 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 18 August (4 days)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1 Christian</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7 F 4 M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11 Myanmar</td>
<td>10 Buddhist</td>
<td>10 2012 1 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 August to 4 Sept (12 days)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 F</td>
<td>1 Christian</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Introduction to Editing</td>
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<td>6 F 6 M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 Myanmar</td>
<td>10 Buddhist</td>
<td>10 2012 1 2011 1 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Sept to 6 Oct (23 days)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2 Christian</td>
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<td>Film History</td>
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<td>4 F 7 M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 Myanmar</td>
<td>9 Buddhist</td>
<td>9 2012 1 2011 1 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 21 Oct (12 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 Chin 1 Lisu 1 Shan-Pa-O</td>
<td>2 Christian</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7 F 6 M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9 Myanmar</td>
<td>11 Buddhist</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Nov to 1 Dec (12 days)</td>
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<td>1 Christian</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2 F 2 M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 Myanmar</td>
<td>4 Buddhist</td>
<td>1 2005 1 2006 1 2007 1 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Dec to 7 Jan 2013 (20 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 Rakhine</td>
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### Appendix II

#### TABLE 2 - Summary of Figures for 2012

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<th>Total Training Days</th>
<th>Total No. of People Trained</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Joined YFS</th>
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<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25 Female 36 Male</td>
<td>13 Ethnicities comprising of: 40 Myanmar 4 Chin 4 Shan 1 Myanmar-Muslim 1 Lisu 2 Myanmar-Chinese 1 Kayin 2 Rakhine 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese 1 Kayin-Armenian 1 Shan-Pa-O 1 Bamar-Shan 2 Mon</td>
<td>3 Religions comprising of: 51 Buddhist 8 Christian 2 Islam</td>
<td>35 2012 9 2011 5 2007 2 2006 6 2005</td>
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### Appendix III

#### TABLE 3 - YFS Alumni Destinations

*Results from the 67 YFS alumni who answered query about where they are working now.*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Specialism</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td><strong>Producer/Director</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Freelance film-related</td>
<td>8 5 2 6 5 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>TV or Radio station</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government MMPO &amp; MMPE</td>
<td>1 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO film-related</td>
<td>2 4 1</td>
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<td>Other NGO work</td>
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<td>Student</td>
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<td>Working for YFS</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non film-related work</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
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YANGON FILM SCHOOL

EVALUATION REPORT BY INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR CHRISTINE FORRESTER

February 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the report is to provide an evaluation of the work of the Yangon Film School (YFS) in relation to a grant from the European Union, which aimed to build on the work of the School in training young filmmakers in Myanmar, with a particular emphasis on documentary filmmaking and through this activity and the resultant films, to contribute to the processes of democratisation and dialogue. The evaluation focused on the experiences and views of both students of the School, and also those organisations that have commissioned work from YFS.

Yangon Film School is the only school providing documentary film-making teaching in Myanmar. Over the past few years, its films, both those produced by students and those commissioned by a range of organisations, have been shown at both local and international film festivals and several have won awards. Its ethos is founded on the basis of quality linked to creativity, to explore through its teaching and its productions the diversity of Myanmar and the experiences of its peoples and communities. Its diverse student intakes have reflected the ethnicities of Myanmar and this in itself has proved to be a major strength in relation to the issues that have been explored in its productions. The project has achieved its objectives in recruiting to its workshops students from the range of ethnic communities and also achieved a gender balance. This has increased the number of women engaged in film-making and the audio-visual industries and also enabled films to be made, and stories told, that reflect women’s perspectives on the culture and communities of Myanmar. Providing increased opportunities for students from the various ethnicities of Myanmar to study at YFS has also opened up opportunities for films to be produced in local languages, such as the film Bungkus which is the first film to be scripted in the Haka Chin language. Films in local language not only reflect the realities of diversity but also enable an audience to hear as well as see the reflection of their lives and their local cultures. This reflection of cultural identities is particularly critical in this time of transition.

YFS is clearly setting the benchmark for quality and artistry in filmmaking that has been absent from film in Myanmar. What is critical about the School and its ethos is that it has provided the space for filmmaking that is based on technical quality to an international standard, combined with creativity that focuses on story-telling. Past students felt that this type of filmmaking, which is not just for commercially driven objectives, is important, and will contribute to raising standards for all types of film in Myanmar.

Past students of YFS emphasised that they see themselves as a community of filmmakers, sharing the values and ethos of documentary film-making imparted to them through the workshops they have attended. They are also increasingly linking with other independent filmmakers. It is clear that what the past YFS students bring to this community is precisely these values of linking international standards in relation to technical quality to a significant understanding of the role of documentary film in telling stories and the creativity they employ to tell these stories.

Interviewees from the NGOs who have commissioned films from YFS noted that their experiences of working with them was very good overall, with committed and passionate individuals and teams, who responded well to them, as the clients, and the results were high quality product. As one of the respondents noted: “They brought documentary artistry to the process, to make a compelling story, which is beautiful to watch. It is not propaganda and goes much beyond expectations.” As the commissioned films used both ex- and current students as the teams making the films, this suggests that the high quality of the teaching in YFS contributed significantly to the experience of the commissioners of films. It is precisely this high quality of product and the approach of YFS that is enabling both the voice of the artist and the community to be reflected through high-quality documentary film.
The commissioned films made by YFS have been extensively used for advocacy purposes. As one NGO interviewee noted: "Films are a powerful medium for PR and public information - they give a more in-depth connection to what organisations are doing and communicate to the public. When films are made in the local community, they demonstrate to the local people what is happening there; the filming gives the community the message that the work is serious and this has an impact on the local community. The stories made by YFS are human stories - to communicate ‘here is someone just like you and this is what had transformed them inside and what this does to help them transform their environment’. Films show this transformation process."

As the environment changes in Myanmar, the possibilities and opportunities for both Yangon Film School and Yangon Film Services increases. Suggestions were made by interviewees for increasing the range and scope of the courses offered and the range of films that YF Services could offer. Work needs to be undertaken on both strategic and business planning for the future. Sustainability is possible - past students are now working as trainers and mentors for courses and a lot of skill and technical expertise has been transferred to Myanmar through the work undertaken with the EU grant support.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

The aim of this report is to provide an evaluation of the work of the Yangon Film School (YFS) in relation to a grant from the European Union, which aimed to build on the work of the School in training young filmmakers in Myanmar, with a particular emphasis on documentary filmmaking and through this activity and the resultant films, to contribute to the processes of democratisation and dialogue.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To evaluate progress towards achieving the specific objectives of the project and its expected results
- To analyse who and why change has, or has not, happened and to consolidate learning for the future work of the Yangon Film School and its partners

The key questions for the evaluation are:

- To what extent has the project achieved the results and objectives set out in the logical framework?
- To what extent has the quality of design of the YFS project been relevant in achieving results and addressing the needs of the final beneficiaries?
- How has the YFS project’s efficiency of implementation contributed to the achievement of the results and in accessing a wider range of target groups?
- To what extent are the achievements likely to be sustainable?

The evaluation also intended to look at key learning points for YFS and make recommendations for the future.

The evaluation focused on the experiences and views of both students of the School, and also those organisations that have commissioned work from YFS. It is understood that the final report for the EU will cover the basic statistical data, demonstrating the extent to which the project has met its targets in relation to student intake, and in particular its diversity and gender balance, and number of films produced, as well as providing the final financial statements for the project. It is therefore not the intention of this report to cover this statistical information - however, it is understood that the targets noted in the logical framework have been achieved over the course of the project.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

Due to limitations on resources and also to time pressures, the field work for the evaluation was carried out over a three day period, including a weekend. Interviewees included key staff from NGOs that had commissioned films from YFS, staff and former students of the School and Committee members. With the
exception of the NGO partners, group discussions were used. This approach enabled a wide range of views to be explored, with the maximum number of participants, given the limited time available. It is understood that all past students at the School were contacted for their availability by the School’s Manager - those able to attend therefore self-selected. The schedule for the meetings is given at Appendix 5.

Two interviewees from NGOs had to cancel their interviews at short notice, due in one case to pressing work commitments and in the other case for personal reasons. It did not prove possible to reschedule these interviews.

Interviews and group discussions were carried out using a series of prompt questions, which were then followed up with questions based on the responses to the initial questions. This enabled a more wide ranging discussion and avoided the limitations that a structured questionnaire schedule imposes. In the discussion groups, all participants were asked to respond to questions, so that all views could be taken into account.

A wide range of films, both produced by students and those commissioned by NGOs, were also viewed for the evaluation.

The report has not been structured under the specific log frame objectives, but under three key areas that bring together the expected results from the programme:

- Building the culture of documentary filmmaking in Myanmar: this section will cover media policy; the provision of inclusive and pluralistic educational opportunities in the media sector; developing the target group to hold jobs in the audio-visual industry;
- Contributing to change - enabling the voice of the artist and the voice of the community: this section will cover the diversity of the target group; the contribution of YFS through its filmmaking to development and an increase in an understanding of civil society and involvement in enabling social change; and gender issues
- Towards the future - sustainability : this section will cover the infrastructure and strategic for the development of YFS as an autonomous media resource, including management skills transfer;

Throughout the text, small pen portraits of the students of YFS have been included.

1.3. THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT IN MYANMAR

Since the programme started in 2010, events connected to political change in Myanmar have moved rapidly, changing the environment significantly. Elections to the regional and national Parliaments, the freeing of political prisoners (and most recently the government acknowledging that there are political prisoners), the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest and her subsequent election to the National Parliament, and changes in the media laws and in the laws governing the rights of assembly have contributed to a new atmosphere of potential for dialogues and discussions and a feeling of increased freedom that is palpable. New media opportunities are developing, and increased access to the internet is apparent. But as many of the interviewees noted, this is a country that is still in transition and whilst it is getting freer, many of the changes are not yet guaranteed by law. It is increasingly possible to film without permission and even where permission has to be sought, it is now much easier to obtain. However, as interviewees during the evaluation noted, the attitude and mind-set of those who “control” is still the same - and the interpretation of the law and regulations, across a whole range of areas, does depend on individuals.

Thus although there is still some caution, that these changes could be reversed, the general feeling is one of more optimism and opportunity. The opening up of the country, with the removal of sanctions, also means that many foreign interests are now exploring the economic opportunities offered by Myanmar. There are many issues in health, education, social and community development, environment that can potentially be addressed, not least with the funds that may be available as more international donors look to support development. But there are risks that as an increased international presence is engaged in Myanmar’s future, the real issues and concerns of the Myanmar people and their voices may fail to be heard, as both commercial and donor interests dominate the discussion.
It is within this changing context that the work undertaken by YFS over the past two years needs to be evaluated, acknowledging both the opportunities and the risks in the future.

1.4. A NOTE ON YFS
There are two components to YFS - the Yangon Film School and Yangon Film Services. Although the grant was specifically given to Yangon Film School, this evaluation needed to look at how the work of the two components is linked, not least as Yangon Film Services is the primary vehicle for the commissioned films and employs graduates of the school in producing these films. The future potential of both is also closely linked, as will be discussed in section 2.3.3.

2. FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

“We still have the shadow of the past inside us.
Films enable these shadows to be brought into the light”
Past student of YFS

2.1 BUILDING THE CULTURE OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING IN MYANMAR

2.1.1 Reflecting the Diversity of Myanmar
Yangon Film School is the only school providing documentary film-making teaching in Myanmar. Over the past few years, its films, both those produced by students and those commissioned by a range of organisations, have been shown at both local and international film festivals and several have won awards. Its ethos is founded on the basis of quality linked to creativity, to explore through its teaching and its productions the diversity of Myanmar and the experiences of its peoples and communities. Its diverse student intakes have reflected the ethnicities of Myanmar and this in itself has proved to be a major strength in relation to the issues that have been explored in its productions. The project has achieved its objectives in recruiting to its workshops students from the range of ethnic communities and also achieved a gender balance. This has increased the number of women engaged in film-making and the audio-visual industries and also enabled films to be made, and stories told, that reflect women’s perspectives on the culture and communities of Myanmar. Providing increased opportunities for students from the various ethnicities of Myanmar to study at YFS has also opened up opportunities for films to be produced in local languages, such as the film ‘Bungkus’ which is the first film to be scripted in the Chin language. Films in local language not only reflect the realities of diversity but also enable an audience to hear as well as see the reflection of their lives and their local cultures. This reflection of cultural identities is particularly critical in this time of transition.

“I was an English major at University. I like writing, poems and short stories, and also photography and painting. Film is something where I can mix all of this art in one place. I want to try and be a scriptwriter to express words into visual media. There are many stories and cultures that people need to know - I want to tell these stories through films. Being a scriptwriter is the way to do this. I’m on my way.”
Anna Biak Tha Mawi, ethnic Chin

2.1.2 Linking Technical Quality and Creativity
YFS is clearly setting the benchmark for quality and artistry in filmmaking that has been absent from film in Myanmar. What is critical about the School and its ethos is that it has provided the space for filmmaking that is based on technical quality to an international standard, combined with creativity that focuses on storytelling. Past students felt that this type of filmmaking, which is not just for commercially driven objectives, is important, and will contribute to raising standards for all types of film in Myanmar.

2.1.3 Achieving Technical Quality
The technical quality is very important; as interviewees noted, films cannot be shown to the world without achieving a high international standard in order to enter the international market. It was noted that in the
past and presently, film quality in general in Myanmar is low and that YFS has been setting the standard which should become the standard for Myanmar films. Interviewees see this as linked to the future of an independent film industry in Myanmar - Myanmar is not a mainstream filmmaker, and this is linked both to the low quality of much current product and also the need to create an audience for higher quality films, and the development of film festivals etc. To achieve this, interviewees suggested that there is a need to strengthen the education of filmmakers to make well-made films and that this is where the training approach of YFS has been critical. There is also a need to show the films more widely, to demonstrate the difference a well-made film makes. YFS is also developing its links with the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation (a government sponsored body) and its role in film-making education is being acknowledged by this Association. The YFS team see their role as increasingly working with the mainstream film industry to increase both technical and artistic quality of films.

2.1.4 The Role of YFS Workshops in Increasing Technical Quality and Creativity

It is precisely the workshops that YFS has run and which have been supported under this grant that has opened up the discussions on technical quality and creativity within the Myanmar film industry. YFS workshops were seen by past students as being very different from other types of training workshops - in particular students who had also studied abroad in other film schools noted that the critical difference was that YFS does not only provide technical training, but also adds the artistic sense of film. In some other film schools, the emphasis for documentary film-making is more on a journalistic approach, rather than on the wide range of ways in which stories can be told through documentary film. Students also noted that at YFS, every student has to learn all tasks connected with film-making, thus ensuring that even where they subsequently chose to specialise, they are fully conversant with the roles of all members of a film team. Although the script-writing course is different in this respect, the making of the scripts and therefore engagement with a film team, has ensured that the writers are also fully engaged in the whole process.

“I was a major in computer science. I am now trying to be a good filmmaker. YFS has taught me why I want to be a filmmaker - for sharing, for each other. We have to learn to respect each other. I know we have to research, to understand before we start on the process of making the film.”

Khin Myanmar, Burmese

All of the students interviewed agreed that the way the courses were structured increased their confidence, both in technical skills and personally. All are required to speak, and to comment, during the modules of the courses. The empathetic content of the films is specifically developed through watching films and subsequent discussion as to how to develop the empathy, how to enable the open discussion between the director and the protagonists of the film. The linkage of the technical aspects of filmmaking with deeper understanding of what film is about, and how it can impact on the viewer was seen as particularly important. Students particularly praised the teaching approach through which they gained an understanding that everything in a film helps to tell a story, and that this comes from the places we don’t always understand. To enable this, analysis is a key part of the course, with the teachers showing films followed by discussion on the ways the filmmaker has made them.

What is also notable, both in discussion with the past students, the commissioners of films and in the films themselves is the way in which the filmmakers are clearly able to develop empathy with the protagonists in the films. Those who had made the films noted that a key part of their learning was the time spent building trust with the individuals and communities they would be filming - that good documentary requires research in the field and an understanding of the sensitivities on the ground around the projects.

This view was corroborated by the commissioners of films - implementation on the ground was in the main seen as excellent and very professional. Commissioners had in general a good idea of the type of film they wanted to make and the messages they wanted to get across. They noted that YFS advised on what would make a good film and the processes felt collaborative - crews were noted as blending in to the
local environment and this was put down to good training. Editing was also seen as professional and it was acknowledged that the role of the international mentors was important in this respect.

For scriptwriting, what was appreciated was that no ‘set’ format was provided. The course focused on teaching the ‘thinking’ of scriptwriting. Where there has been experience of other scriptwriting courses (e.g. one student who had also studied in Prague), it was found that YFS more integrated the scriptwriting into the whole filmmaking process. This more holistic approach was seen as very important, as the scriptwriter can be engaged in the whole process and can learn the problems of interpreting the script and understand how to then change the script on location. The one negative comment made was that the scriptwriting course participants would like shorter student films made (5 minutes or so) so that more films can be made from their scripts. On recent courses, only a limited number of the scripts were chosen for filming, due to the scripts being lengthy and budget limitations.

Of critical importance in the training and learning process has been the employment of highly experienced international mentors, who have emphasised the international technical standards and have enabled students to work towards these standards. Whilst ex-students have now become trainers on the courses and mentors in their own right, this international expertise is seen as still being important. The mentoring model is seen as a good model and one valued by the students.

The development of ex-students as both trainers and mentors is also important for the longer term sustainability of YFS, both as a film school and as a production unit. It is clear that the expertise is now being embedded in Myanmar, and this will both extend the potential for further development of filmmaking teaching through the School and for production capability in the wider film industry to international technical and artistic standards.

“I’ve worked with a lot of NGOs. I became a trainer in 2009, having attended YFS in 2007. I wanted to share my learning. My particular interests are in editing and sound recording. I also work with a small group of friends and we make our own projects. I’m now working with YFS, on a film about car tyres.”

Kyaw Myo Lwin, Burmese from Yangon

2.1.5 The International Link

The link and support from the EU and the connections with Berlin and the wider international community of documentary filmmakers has been seen as very important, particularly in bringing in external influences and international expertise. The isolation of Myanmar from the international community over many years, the international sanctions and the lack of opportunities for international exchange has left much of the country and its industries, including the film industry in a ‘backwater’. It is precisely projects like this one that the EU has funded that has enabled the development of new ‘thinking’ that will influence the future development of Myanmar, and which has wider implications than just filmmaking, as the films themselves open up opportunities for discussion about development issues (see next section of this report). Students from YFS have also been able to achieve a standard that has enabled them to continue their studies abroad - there are currently five students at the Prague film school (FAMU) and other students have also studied there and in the UK.

2.1.6 YFS and Wider Values in Journalism and Reporting

Interviewees were also asked what marked out the YFS films from other types of documentary. Key points that were noted were that YFS films took a very different approach from documentary as journalism. Journalistic reporting on film was seen as very different - more based on action, on getting news to the audience in a limited time frame and leaving out the deeper realities. The current lack of ethical standards in journalism in Myanmar was also commented on, with much “unfair” reporting being present. It was felt that YFS can and has contributed to the debate on journalism, particularly on the risk of a focus in journalism on something that can be ‘sold’ to the public. It was noted that society needs both documentary of the type YFS makes and promotes and journalism with ethical standards.
“I was working as a journalist. I was introduced to YFS by a former student. I was not sure I would be accepted, as a journalist - Is journalism the enemy of documentary? Documentaries I thought were normally made with a narrator, it was my first time, making a documentary with a protagonist. It was very tough, changing myself, through discussions with the teachers. It was such valuable experience. I am still working as a journalist - I have many unfinished stories that I would like to make into films. My problem is time. “

Thiha Thwe, Burmese

Thus whilst YFS has not set out to specifically tackle the issue of journalistic bias and reporting, its films have now been used in journalism training - the Danish organisation International Media Support has since December 2012 been using YFS films regularly as viewing material to improve storytelling skills among their 400 journalist trainees throughout Myanmar. As an IMS trainer notes:

“We had used five videos at the first and second batches of training in December and January. ..... We essentially use the videos to show examples of storytelling about subjects that are around us. This is then followed up by discussions. Some participants were really moved by videos such as the Empty Nest, The Dream, The Bamboo Grove, etc. Thanks to YFS we have these good stories to share with the trainees.”

Through this means, it is clear that YFS products will be helping with the raising of journalistic standards, in telling stories and in reflecting on the issues that face individuals and communities throughout the country.

“I am a specialist journalist. I was trained to write news, but this is boring - just facts and figures. I am more interested in feature writing, I want to tell stories visually, through documentary films. I am also interested in photo essays, as this I can do on my own. At the moment, I am interested in both. I’m currently developing a photo essay on the Shwedagon, but from the perspective of a cleaner - a very different angle.”

Linn Hnin Aye, Burmese

2.1.7 Building the Community of Filmmakers and Influencing the Industry

Past students of YFS emphasised that they see themselves as a community of filmmakers, sharing the values and ethos of documentary film-making imparted to them through the workshops they have attended. They are also increasingly linking with other independent filmmakers. It is clear that what the past YFS students bring to this community is precisely these values of linking international standards in relation to technical quality to a significant understanding of the role of documentary film in telling stories and the creativity they employ to tell these stories. The success of past students in winning prizes at film festivals also adds to the acknowledgement of their particular skills and approaches and therefore the reputation of YFS as a leader in these approaches. This in turn will in the future ensure that the YFS approach is likely to be respected within the Myanmar community of filmmakers and increases the possibility of its wider influence on values (both technical and creative) within the industry.

2.1.8 Commissioned Films

Interviewees from the NGOs who have commissioned films from YFS noted that their experiences of working with them was very good overall, with committed and passionate individuals and teams, who responded well to them, as the clients, and the results were high quality product. As one of the respondents noted: “They brought documentary artistry to the process to make a compelling story, which is beautiful to watch. It is not propaganda and goes much beyond expectations.” As the commissioned films used both ex- and current students as the teams making the films, this suggests that the high quality of the teaching in YFS contributed significantly to the experience of the commissioners of films. As will be discussed further below, it is precisely this high quality of product and the approach of YFS that is enabling both the voice of the artist and the community to be reflected through high-quality documentary film.
2.1.9 Developing Independent Filmmaking

Thanks to the EU grant support, YFS is now equipped up to international standard, with high quality camera equipment and editing suites. Members of YFS can use equipment from YFS to make their own films and this is increasing the range of films being developed. Usually equipment is available to them at no cost, unless they want to produce a film with another co-producer and retain copyright, in which case nominal fees are negotiated. It should be noted that where YFS equipment is used free of charge, the copyright in the film is attributed to YFS. Many past students are also using their own equipment to make films. One of the challenging issues is however the means of showing films. Film distribution is not yet necessarily very free and access to TV, for instance, is not easy. Film festivals, both within Myanmar and internationally, have been key vehicles for the showcasing of the YFS films. This again has been where the international link, through the YFS Berlin team, has been important. Without the knowledge of international festivals and the submission of films to these, the ways in which YFS has been able to build its reputation would have been more limited. Additionally, the annual showing of student films in Yangon, to a primarily international audience, has raised its profile both with donors and with potential commissioners of films. As past students see the ways in which their films are applauded, both within and outside Myanmar, this encourages them in their vocation as independent filmmakers in Myanmar.

“I used to edit Burmese films but wanted to move into documentary. When I was young, I wanted to be a musician, but decided on film-making instead. I like editing - constructing the story in the editing room. In editing the editor and the protagonist in a film become very close. Some of the films are like a poem - I like poetic films. I’m currently working with some friends on a film about a swamp lake near Bago - it’s an area where migratory birds come and the film is about the fishermen on the lake. On the other side of the lake is a hotel - a very different world. I want to capture the tough lives of these fishermen. I’m investing my own money in this film.”

Zaw Naing Oo, ethnic Mon

2.2 CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE - ENABLING THE VOICE OF THE ARTIST AND THE VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

2.2.1 Telling Real Stories and Recording Transition

YFS was seen by many of the interviewees as playing a crucial role in the development of civil society in Myanmar through its work. It is changing the way that NGOs view telling their stories - understanding that facts alone don’t enable the real story to be told. It was noted that story telling is a Myanmar tradition and that people are ready to speak out if they are telling a story. There is a perceived ‘safety’ in the documentary film that enables them to speak out. Through their training, they use an observational approach - spending time building trust with the participants in the film. One interviewee noted that one of the things that the documentary filmmaker can contribute at the present time is the record of transition - so that the next generation can understand the processes that Myanmar went through in this period.

2.2.2 A Responsibility to Show the Reality of People’s Lives

Past students themselves feel a strong responsibility to show the realities of place and of people’s lives. They feel that this is the responsibility of the filmmaker - to increase understanding of different views and different peoples, to help the change process. They would like to tell a lot of untold stories, that before 2010 would be impossible to tell - ‘forbidden things’. The changes from 2010 have opened up possibilities for YFS that were not there before. But change will still take time - as one of the students noted “We still have the shadow of the past inside us. Films enable these “shadows” to be brought into the light”. Some of the students came to YFS because of their commitment to social issues; others learned about social issues through the way in which the courses were structured and the encouragement to explore these issues in their student films.
“My motive for coming to YFS was to raise awareness of the environment through documentary film. I am a graduate in public policy with a concern for sustainable environment. Rather than just trying to save the environment as an individual, we need to tell stories to help with the process. In Shan, most people don’t have an awareness of the environment.”

Cho Pyone, ethnic Shan

2.2.3 Professionalism and Artistry to Tell the Stories

It appears to be precisely the professionalism engendered by the School and the combination of these professional skills with artistic vision that is enabling YFS to produce films for clients that have an extraordinary impact. This combination of artistry and compelling story telling, which is a key part of the School process, is enabling the films to be seen not just as NGO-commissioned fundraising or propaganda films, but as films which can contribute to discussion and debate precisely because they draw in the viewer, communicate in a way that is different, through both image and the ways in which the protagonists in the films are encouraged and enabled to give voice to their views and thoughts, and thus persuade the viewer to see in a different way what may be familiar or predictable.

2.2.4 Reaching Audiences and Enabling Discussions

The commissioned films have in some cases reached wide audiences. A Bright Future, which has just won an award as best film documentary in Myanmar, has achieved massive coverage, being shown in schools and creating debate and discussion about educational approaches. It was reported that at one conference on child-centred approaches to education, the contribution of the main key-note speaker elicited little response from the audience, but then the film was shown and stimulated “a really great discussion, which involved educationalists from throughout the country”. Our Forests, Our Future has been widely shown in many different fora and has influenced thinking in the Forestry Department. Rice - Myanmar’s Future has been shown at high levels in government and a longer version of this film is extensively used as a training film with rice producers.

More than a Tree was seen by the commissioning NGO as excellent, and above the usual quality that an NGO expects. For this film, Malteser International wanted to raise awareness of their organisation and work that they have been undertaking in Rakhine State on disaster risk reduction. The film crew followed activities in the selected community, filming events as they happened. This film has not been widely distributed as yet as Malteser International needs to undertake further discussion as to what to do with it.

The Change Maker, produced for Metta Foundation (and Shalom and Action Aid) has been widely seen. The protagonist in this film has now become the Project Co-ordinator for a livelihoods programme in Shan state. The Executive Director of the Foundation noted:

"Films are a powerful medium for PR and public information - they give a more in-depth connection to what organisations are doing and communicate to the public. When films are made in the local community, they demonstrate to the local people what is happening there; the filming gives the community the message that the work is serious and this has an impact on the local community. The stories made by YFS are human stories - to communicate ‘here is someone just like you and this is what had transformed them inside and what this does to help them transform their environment’. Films show this transformation process."

Films can provide to the local community an appreciation of what is reflected, and pride in what they have done together. Metta use their films at the village level in training and to start discussions, particularly on community organising, which is why The Change Maker is important for them. They also use it in training of trainers, and in their branch offices with staff. They have shared their films with local government for advocacy and with also ceasefire armed groups “who like them”. Metta noted that they showed The Change Maker to a group of donors and one woman, not much in favour of NGOs, said that the film showed a local agency being an efficient support to local communities.
2.2.5 Filmmakers from Ethnic Communities
As YFS has filmmakers from ethnic communities, this can be valuable for organisations that want to make films in areas that other agencies don’t have access to - the filmmakers as members of the communities can work in a way that those from outside of those communities could not. Metta noted that when they as an organisation are starting to work with people for change, they have to be cautious to work from where the local community is. For them being able to use film is important, as film plays a non-threatening role in advocacy. Critically, it communicates the struggle that people go through in the change process that it would not be possible to communicate in written language – it shows ordinary people talking about change. Film offers people at the community level a chance to contribute to policy change and discussions: “This is their opportunity”. Being able to use filmmakers from the ethnic communities assists this process.

2.2.6 A Holistic Process
For Save the Children, YFS produced two videos. What was critical for them was that the whole process was managed from beginning to end, from the treatment of the subject, to the script, to the filming and editing. As with other clients, the work was seen as very professional and the quality was good. Save the Children noted that if they had contracted an independent filmmaker, they would have had to do the preparation work, script etc. YFS is therefore very cost effective.

2.2.7 Using Films for Advocacy
Save the Children have used one of their films - *Listen to Us* - for advocacy, with government and donors, and one other (*The Long Way Home*) primarily with partners. As they have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Social Welfare, appropriate films have been shared with them. They are interested in getting another of their YFS-produced films - *Let’s Get on the Bus* - on to MRTV4 as they would like to reach a wider audience. This film was seen as strengthening local groups and local civil society. They have independently of YFS produced one film in local language (Shan) on HIV/AIDS. During the interview, they indicated that they would like to be able to use films with those with hearing impairment, through the inclusion of a sign language interpreter in the finished product. The YFS Manager noted that they would be able to do this. It was however also noted by Save the Children that much of their PR and advocacy materials are produced centrally, in the UK. However, they do not necessarily find these materials appropriate for local purposes in Myanmar and would prefer to be able to commission YFS to produce further more appropriate local materials for them. The film product from YFS was seen as being directly comparable in terms of quality as that produced centrally in Europe, but much more appropriate, as it can show the effects of work being undertaken in Myanmar and is therefore more appropriate for advocacy.

Both Pyoe Pin and Malteser International see documentary films for advocacy as been very important for Myanmar and this importance will grow, particularly as more young people access social media (films on You Tube etc). They both noted that films need to be in the Myanmar languages and made by Myanmar professionals. Improvements in journalistic practice, inspired by good documentary films (see previous section above) will assist the development of the NGO sector. Documentary film is seen as inspiring people more than ordinary journalism, by getting across a better feeling of how people are. As one interviewee noted: “A picture is one thing, but film provides the wider vision and is more entertaining whilst promoting messages - through quality entertainment, people get education”. It was suggested by more than one interviewee that people don’t necessarily see the real life under their eyes - YFS films raise challenging issues, issues based on in-depth documentaries that can raise this awareness - and “Open questions to our consciences”. Many issues that could not be talked about before and injustices e.g. land grabbing, can now be more openly addressed and documentary films are a good way of exploring these issues There is an increased awareness of the use of media, but much more that needs to be done in raising standards and in developing areas such as citizen journalism. But as all interviewees noted, film is better than words in reaching the widest audience - and can reach the non-literate that other media cannot reach so effectively.

Film was also seen as a means by which the government can see that organisations have a good rapport with the people and communities and do positive things towards society and economic development - this
is seen as critical in Myanmar where currently NGOs do not have a high reputation and where their work is not fully understood - documentary films can show success stories. Films of the kind made by YFS can show solutions without criticising government - can in fact, as one interviewee noted, put government in a good light. Working with an organisation that has team members who are from and can work in local language is important.

“Advocacy will become more and more important and documentary film has a big role to play in this and YFS has a very big role to play in developing high quality documentary film to assist with advocacy”.

2.2.8 Growing Civil Society

Civil Society is still growing in Myanmar - not yet fully recognised for its potential by government. It was suggested by some interviewees that civil society should become more “politicised” - to have a clear position on issues, to advocate, to understand their constituencies more effectively. Documentary film, it was suggested, has an important part to play in this, but it must be professional and this is what YFS offers. As noted elsewhere in this report, there is a lot of poor journalism in Myanmar, so achieving a professional product is very important. It was noted that the media are used to monopolise discussions and to divide communities: and thus well-made and balanced documentaries are needed to make a difference. The potential of television was noted by a number of interviewees, where currently “there is no educational value in MTV” and where the broadcasting of documentary to both entertain and also educate and inform, can contribute much to the development of an understanding of the role of civil society. There is therefore great potential but still a major space to develop.

There is however a need to work more closely with the NGO community, particularly the local NGO community, to inform them more about the ways in which film can assist them and about the ways in which YFS works.

2.2.9 Individual Commitment

Beyond the commissioned films, students themselves want to show their films at festivals, in the media etc - not for profit, but to raise awareness through the films of the issues that concern them - e.g. disability, the environment etc. Thus using film to raise awareness, for advocacy and to explore issues is not just an issue for organisations commissioning films. Through the way in which the courses are taught and the encouragement of students to make films that reflect the realities of life in Myanmar, many (if not all) of the students have raised their levels of awareness of social action, and of the link of filmmaking and public policy. One past student founded an organisation - Better Life - after her course at YFS, to work for community development and women’s empowerment. She has used the skills learned as a filmmaker in her work in her NGO: she was motivated to set up the NGO by seeing the emotions that film could convey, and wanting to dig deeper for the causes she became concerned about, particularly setting up a women’s empowerment programme. Her course at YFS therefore led her into social activism. She is now hoping to study for her Masters in Public Policy in the US, and then to come back and link the two areas of public policy and filmmaking. She sees strong connections between the two areas: as she noted; “Public policy is about research and documentation and data - no emotional feelings, no effects of policy seen. When I use documentary film, I can highlight why policy is important and how it can affect people.” Thanks to a grant organised by YFS, she also studied in 2010 in England at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield.

Another ex-student has made their own independent film about a disabled girl living in the Delta and her wish to go to school. Linked with the film has been other PR, including newspaper coverage (Myanmar Times 11 - 17 February 2013). It is hoped that this film will be shown on MRTV4 to raise awareness of disability issues.

These are only two examples of the ways in which the individual commitment to activism and change have been developed in students through the ways in which YFS has worked. It appears to be precisely this individually developed awareness, through the teaching, that has enabled YFS to respond so effectively to NGO needs for films both demonstrating the work they are doing and for advocacy. Without the understanding
and commitment of the individuals who have been trained in a particular way through YFS, it can be suggested that the films produced for the NGOs would not be so effective, combining as they do technical professionalism with creativity that provides the seeing and understanding ‘eye’ that enables stories to be told in ways which can challenge and influence the viewer on a wide range of issues.

2.2.10 Gender
As well as achieving the training of individuals from the range of ethnicities within Myanmar, a major achievement of YFS has been in gender, not least in ensuring a gender balance in recruitment for nearly all courses, but also in recruitment for its management team. Women interviewees noted how important the teaching approach had been in breaking down gender barriers, with women taking on all roles in film production, in a break with tradition. It was noted that there are an increasing number of possibilities for women in the audio-visual industry and that YFS has shown that women can do anything in this industry. Women students valued the fact that they had to learn to do everything and had to build in themselves the confidence to lead teams when working as directors. It was noted that there are still few female filmmakers, but this number is increasing due to YFS. Women from YFS have been invited to show their films at a Women’s Film Festival in South Korea. But as important as specifically dedicated film festivals, the women filmmakers standing in front of the audience, after a film screening, such as at the December 2012 Student Film Screening in Yangon, sends a powerful message that women are good filmmakers and take on all of the roles.

2.3 TOWARDS THE FUTURE - SUSTAINABILITY
Clearly, as noted in the two sections above, YFS is making a significant difference to the culture of documentary filmmaking in Myanmar, and through its films is enabling both the voice of the artist and the voices of communities to be seen and heard. The role of YFS has therefore been important, and all interviewees wanted to see it continue into the future.

2.3.1 Governance, Management Structure and Changes
Over 2012, changes to the structure of YFS separated the school and the commissioned film production areas. There are now two Managers, who work as a team - one for the School and one for Production. Currently, overall direction remains located in Berlin. The Management Committee in Yangon has line management responsibility for the two managers and other staff and makes decisions in consultation with the Director. From the point of view of the staff team, the separation of the two elements of YFS is working well. An initial point of hand-over to entirely local management and direction, envisaged for 2013, has been changed to 2015, which, from the point of view of both the staff team and the management committee, seems more realistic.

There is a need to strengthen the governance role within the Management Committee. Work has been undertaken on this, but the major problem seen by the committee members is that they are also very busy people, and do not necessarily have or give the time that is essential for the development of the work of the committee. The election process is seen to work well and the fact that the committee itself is drawn from the membership, who are past students of YFS, is seen as a major strength.

2.3.2 Membership
Currently about 20 - 30 members are seen as being really involved. It was suggested that some members may feel a little disconnection from YFS. There is a need to motivate members more - to engage them more in discussions on future direction and strategy of YFS.

2.3.3 Relationship between Yangon Film School and Yangon Film Services
The relationship between Yangon Film School and Yangon Film Services is critical, as the production side gives work to students (on the job training) as well as post-training work possibilities. This linkage is seen as one of the major strengths of YFS as an organisation. There is now a pool of highly experienced filmmakers
who can be drawn on for commissioned work. There are however some risks - it was suggested that there is a need for clear criteria for selection of students to work on productions (risks of favouritism) and for the selection of teams to work on commissioned films.

2.3.4 Developing Future Strategies
One weakness that was identified during the evaluation is the lack of a clear strategic plan, developed and owned by the Management Committee, for the future direction of both parts of YFS. Such a strategy should be produced with full consultation with the membership - the members, who comprise all past students of YFS, are a significant strength of the organisation and need to be fully engaged in discussions about its future direction. Linked to a strategic plan, business plans for both the School and for the Services should be developed, which will assist with financial planning, including such areas as the development of bursaries for students and also the costing of commissioned films and financial margins that would enable some surpluses for investment in development.

In relation to business planning, the costs of commissioned films are currently seen as high for local NGOs (less so for INGOs) - one of the local NGOs interviewed suggested that only $2000 - 3000 would be possible for local NGOs to afford, possibly up to maximum of $5000. It was suggested that there are local independent filmmakers offering to make films for $700 - 800. However, it was not clear what this low cost would include, nor could the quality of these films be assured. This is therefore an issue of educating local NGOs as to the advantages of a quality product, even if it is more costly, and also promoting the holistic service that YFS provides, from concept to finished product.

It was suggested that YF Services should branch out from NGO films to demonstrate that this is not all that it does, although it was also recognised that NGOs are a key market and YFS can ensure a high quality for advocacy purposes. This again is an issue that could be discussed more widely in the discussions towards the development of strategic plans for both the School and for Services.

2.3.5 Increasing Promotional Activities
It was noted that the market should be opening up for films on TV with changes in censorship. Additionally, links with the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation open up possibilities both for the employment of past students, as well as a role for YFS in relation to film production. A strategic plan also needs to cover areas such as promotion of the services that YFS can currently offer, with a more proactive approach to NGOs to increase their understanding of the potential of documentary film both to record their work and for advocacy.

It should also, in relation to promotion, look at how wider audiences can be achieved for the student film showings, which are a showcase for new talent. Despite the venue for these being changed, interviewees noted that these events are not as widely promoted as they could be, particularly with new interests entering Myanmar, both commercial and also related to international NGOs and donors.

2.3.6 Ensuring a Professional Experience
The experience of the commissioners of films was in the main good, but some issues were raised which are of importance for the future. It was suggested that it is important that YFS must be run by filmmakers, but that in addition, they must have the professionalism in management to negotiate with clients. Capacities still need to be built in this direction - senior level expertise is still needed to guide teams to focus on what is really essential for the finished film. For the clients from Western based NGOs (INGOs), or from the local programmes with western staff, what is needed is an understanding of what the international customer wants and expects, and to understand their attitudes, coupled with the need to ensure quality standards throughout, both in the film process and in the administration.

There was one dissenting voice amongst the interviewees, a local NGO where it is possible that communication had not been as effective as possible and where the interviewee expressed some dissatisfaction with the final product. However, it should be noted that the person commissioning the film on behalf of this NGO, who
had been engaged with the scripting and filming process, had left the NGO and the person interviewed had only engaged with the process at a very late stage. There did however seem to be some confusion on the part of this NGO as to what the film was for - as to whether it was descriptive of an issue, an advocacy film or a training film. Ensuring complete clarity as to what is required, and ensuring that where personnel in an organisation change during the filmmaking process that all discussions are fully documented so that there can be no misunderstandings at a later stage is a key part of ensuring that YFS offers a fully professional experience to those commissioning films.

2.3.7 Wider Dissemination
It was suggested by several interviewees that YFS could do more to help with dissemination of films produced on behalf of organisations. NGOs suggested that they are wary when it comes to working with the local media, knowing the appropriate channels etc. It was suggested that knowledge of the local scene - which would be appropriate channels to approach etc - is important and this could be part of the YFS process, what to do with the final product and how to reach different audiences. This suggests a ‘brokerage’ role for YFS, for which a fee could be charged.

2.3.8 An Increasing International Presence
YFS needs to consider what relationship it could or should develop with incoming journalists and filmmakers - visits by Deutsche Welle, and the BBC to Myanmar were mentioned. YFS could play a role in facilitating these kinds of visits and where appropriate, assist in recommending personnel. It was noted that the BBC approached YFS, looking for a good cinematographer, precisely because of its good reputation.

Interviewees in YFS are interested in links with other film schools - FAMU in Prague, for instance, to which a number of past YFS students have gone . FAMU is apparently talking about setting up in Yangon and could be a competitor for YFS. It was suggested that discussions should take place about a possible partnership. Other possible partnerships are also being explored, with the Ludwigsburg Film Academy in Germany and FEMIS in Paris, where there is a potential place for a student on their Summer School, but the student must be able to speak French. Continuing links with the European tradition of filmmaking are clearly very important for the past students, and it is encouraging that there is interest in the development of cinematographic teaching in Myanmar on the part of European Film Schools.

2.3.9 The Future of the Film School
One area on which a significant number of the interviewees agreed was that the School should concentrate on quality filmmaking and members - i.e. students - should in future be selected from those who are really keen to make films and that selection based on other criteria (e.g. ethnicity) should not be as important as a quality student intake. It was noted that not all of the students selected for each course continue in filmmaking. What YFS members want to see is a community that will work together to build films for Myanmar.

There was some agreement that the School should be a general film school, not just for documentary filmmaking but for all types of film. Past students would also like the opportunity to learn more about management - finance, raising funds, production training.

Outside organisations - in this case the NGOs - would like to see YFS staff training NGOs in filmmaking, through short courses. It should be noted, however, that this may run counter to ensuring high quality filmmaking and should be considered with some caution.

YFS members were divided in their views about the focus on documentary filmmaking. Whilst courses have been introduced in True Fictions, effectively drama documentary, there were some voices that suggested YFS can both train students in fiction and commercial films, as well as make them through Yangon Film Services. Other voices wanted the focus on documentary to remain, albeit with the inclusion also of True Fictions. Developing True Fictions production is seen as needing more equipment, lighting, dollys etc. One
critical area of discussion around this direction was the poor quality of acting seen in the films produced with actors rather than with real life protagonists, as in the documentary films. Graduates of acting schools in Myanmar are seen as being of poor quality - non actors were seen as being better than so-called trained actors. Until this issue is resolved, whilst True Fictions may be a useful direction for training purposes in YFS, caution should be taken in wider dissemination of the resultant films, as poorly acted films, however well written and technically competent, could undermine the high quality reputation of YFS. This point was strongly made by one of the commissioners of YFS films, who had attended student film showings and was not impressed by the True Fictions product.

This is clearly an issue that requires wider discussion and could form part of discussions around the strategic plan and direction.

All interviewees who are members of YFS suggested that a wider range of courses could be offered, including more continuing professional education and courses in other parts of the country. These should be offered to those who are currently filmmakers as well as entrants to the industry. This would also be a way of raising standards generally amongst filmmakers and the industry.

2.3.10 Increasing the Production of Independent Films

Currently, if members use YFS equipment to make their own films there are copyright issues - there is a perceived risk of conflict if the copyright rests with YFS and members want to show their own films more widely. Clearly this is an issue of what financial gain there could be for the individual film-maker or team, and requires a contractual solution. For some members, it was noted that wider dissemination of their films is not a question of financial gain, but to raise issues. YFS needs to discuss with its membership how it could give more freedom of action - contracts and copyright issues are likely to become more important as wider opportunities for dissemination of films open up. In the case of student productions, it is clearly appropriate for the copyright to be retained by the School, as equipment, tutoring and often budgets are provided for these productions. For the alumni, particularly where they may be working with another partner such as a broadcaster, different models may need to be considered, provided YFS credits and distribution rights can be ensured. In relation to film festivals, currently the YFS Berlin office arranges access to these, which is not without cost. For this reason, where students and alumni are keen to see their films promoted at Festivals, YFS needs the distribution rights. Any earnings from Festival screenings are currently shared 50/50 with the filmmakers. This is more than would normally be the case.

YFS members noted that grants are needed for freelance filmmaking. Currently there is the Production Fund, which filmmakers can pitch to. It was suggested that this should be developed further. Support may be needed to assist the prospective filmmakers in developing proposals and budgets, as this is still a skill little developed in Myanmar. A Documentary Competition will be held in 2013 to encourage students to make more films.

2.3.11 Developing the Community of Filmmakers

The proposed development of a documentary filmmakers association is still in the planning stage. There is however an online network and a presence on Facebook - Filmmakers Network. Social media is increasingly being used to connect with all filmmakers in Myanmar. It was felt that beyond the community of YFS, the development of a wider community would be valuable, not least to develop the principles and practice of high quality filmmaking. YFS members are also encouraged to add their details on the SEA DocNet data base. This organisation aims to encourage and support networking between documentary filmmakers and producers across the region.

It was also suggested that a statement of principles for documentary filmmaking could be part of the development of an association.

2.3.12 Developing Links with the Wider Myanmar Film Industry

The relationship of YFS with MMPO is crucial, not least as they can assist in obtaining permissions for filming, which can still be tricky to obtain. Personal relationships with senior people at MMPO are developing well
and YFS is apparently now seen as a critical resource for the future of the industry. This does of course raise issues about the types of courses that YFS could and should offer and whether it should expand its future remit beyond documentary film.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the evaluation that the work undertaken by both Yangon Film School and Yangon Film Services is playing a significant role in both the development of high quality and creative filmmaking in Myanmar and also in developing a medium through which NGOs in particular can portray issues and enable community voices to be heard.

The contribution of the EU grant towards these achievements has been significant, not least because it has enabled workshops to be held, with free places for both women and for those from ethnic minority communities, which has in turn ensured a diverse and inclusive community of documentary film-makers to be developed - the membership of YFS. This in turn has enabled films to be made which clearly reflect the cultural understandings of these members of YFS - as noted by one interviewee, being able to use filmmakers from particular minority communities to make films within that minority opens up opportunities that would not otherwise be possible. Similarly where women have been able to work with women, to enable their voices to be represented. This is a significant achievement in a society which is often in denial about gender discrimination and where ethnic representation has also in the past been discounted.

The evaluation overall has found few if any areas where the log frame indicators have not been achieved. It has in particular enhanced the inclusiveness and pluralism of civil society and strengthened the involvement of organised civil society in influencing policy change. It has built a structure that appears to be robust, in both governance and management terms, although some additional work could be undertaken to strengthen both towards full transfer of ownership to Myanmar by 2015. Those interviewed demonstrate confidence in their ability as filmmakers and as a community committed to the betterment of Myanmar society. The linkage of social commitment to quality of film is very apparent and is clearly an ethos that underlies the work of the School and which has communicated itself successfully to its students.

In terms of recommendations, the main ones are:

1. The need for a strategic plan or plans, for the Film School and for Yangon Film Services, which should be developed as far as possible with consultation with YFS members. In tandem with a Strategic Plan, a business plan needs to be developed, to identify ways in which diverse income possibilities can be harnessed. This needs to include student numbers and possible fees, coupled with bursaries for poor students; pricing policies for commissioned films; additional services, such as brokerage for distribution, that could be developed.

2. Further discussion is needed on the general direction of both the School and Services, which could form part of the strategic plan development, in relation to a continuing focus on documentary (including True Fiction, with caveats on this area, as noted in the report) and whether the School should become a more general film school. However, it is noted by the evaluator that the significant strength of YFS is in relation to documentary film production and as media outlets develop and also as civil society grows, there will be an increasing need for high quality product that shows and reflects Myanmar realities. Diluting this specialism at this time should be considered with caution.

3. Promotion of both the services offered by YFS, particularly to NGOs, should be undertaken. Wider dissemination of the films produced by YFS should be investigated, including TV showings.

4. The development of the Association of Documentary Filmmakers should be taken forward, with a related promotion of standards for documentary filmmakers.

5. Possible partnerships/linkages, both within Myanmar and with international organisations, should be explored (with Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation; FAMU - Prague Film School; BBC (Bill Hayden from the BBC has since informed us that he would like to employ Burmese YFS trainers in his training programme in NPT); other international media organisations).
### Appendix V

**Meeting Plan of Evaluator Trip**

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>9:30 PM</td>
<td>Arrive to Yangon</td>
<td>Christine Forrester</td>
<td>Evaluator</td>
<td>Ruby Hotel</td>
<td>From Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2.2013</td>
<td>9:00-10:30 AM</td>
<td>Evaluation meeting</td>
<td>Birke Herzbruch</td>
<td>Malteser International</td>
<td>At Malteser Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:00 - 12:00 AM</td>
<td>Evaluation meeting</td>
<td>Mr Shihab</td>
<td>Action Aid Myanmar</td>
<td>At Action Aid Office</td>
<td>UNABLE TO MEET DUE TO WORK COMMITMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 - 1:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 - 3:00 PM</td>
<td>Evaluation meeting</td>
<td>Mr Sai Sam Kham</td>
<td>Metta Foundation</td>
<td>At Metta foundation Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 - 6:00 PM</td>
<td>Evaluation meeting</td>
<td>Naw Phoebe</td>
<td>Save the Children</td>
<td>Save the Children Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.2.2013</td>
<td>9:00 - 11:00 AM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>YFS’s Committee</td>
<td>YFS</td>
<td>At YFS’s Office</td>
<td>Soe Moe Aung; Myo Min Khin; Shin Daewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:00 - 12:00 AM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>Lay Thida</td>
<td>Better Life</td>
<td>At YFS’s office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 - 1:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 - 4:00 PM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>YFS’s Management Team</td>
<td>YFS</td>
<td>At YFS’s Office</td>
<td>Aye Ni Mar (Accountant); Win Naing Administrator and Cashier; Thet OoMaung (Manager, Film School); Hnin El Hlaing (Production Manager)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 - 5:00 PM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>Htwe Htwe Hlaing</td>
<td>Local Resource Centre</td>
<td>At LRC’s office. Solomon Tower.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:00 - 7:00 PM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>Ko Awi Pi</td>
<td>Shalom</td>
<td>At YFS’s Office</td>
<td>UNABLE TO MEET DUE TO PERSONAL ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17.2.2013</td>
<td>9:00 - 11:00 AM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>YFS’s students</td>
<td>YFS</td>
<td>At YFS’s Office</td>
<td>Lin Hnin Aye; Cho Pyone; Khin Myanmar; Zaw NaingGo; Anna; Kyaw Myo Lwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 - 1:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 - 4:00 PM</td>
<td>Evaluation Meeting</td>
<td>YFS’s students</td>
<td>YFS</td>
<td>At YFS’s Office</td>
<td>Khin Myo Myat; Nu Nu Hlaing; Thiha; Doctor Aung Min; Kyaw Swar Hein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 - 5:00 PM</td>
<td>Free talk</td>
<td>YFS’s students</td>
<td>YFS</td>
<td>At YFS’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:00 - 7:00 PM</td>
<td>Buffer time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.2.2013</td>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Departure from Yangon</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Gerry Fox, from Pyoe Pin, was also interviewed, in Bangkok on 14 February 2013.