## 2016 in Numbers

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At the start of its second decade, the Yangon Film School has continued to expand its horizons with its team of dedicated international tutors and local trainers conducting over 250 days of film training in 2016 for 39 existing students and 24 new intakes from 14 different ethnicities. YFS students made a total of 11 short documentaries and ten evaluation films; they developed eight longer-form documentaries as well as one feature length and 13 short fiction screenplays. These films and stories feature the lives of ordinary people in contemporary Myanmar, people who are facing numerous challenges as the country undergoes a period of rapid and unprecedented change on its journey towards democracy.

One of several innovations in 2016 was the introduction of a Docuanimation Course which trained nine students in how to animate documentaries based on testimonies from survivors of gender-based violence. The result yielded three powerful one-minute films which were launched on International Women’s Day 2017 in Naypyitaw in the presence of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The films aired repeatedly on national TV and radio as well as on social media where they have been watched 700,000 times with over 14,000 shares. The Docuanimation Course was supported by the Myanmar Gender Equality Network (GEN), the Heinrich Boell Foundation and Sweden’s International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

Co-operations with NGOs, CSOs and government agencies like these are vital for YFS to consolidate its work and safeguard its future. Another ongoing collaboration is with Pyoe Pin and My Justice on the ‘edutainment’ series about the rule of law, The Sun, The Moon and The Truth. Having successfully undertaken the post-production of Season 1 in 2015, the School was invited in 2016 to develop the scripts for Season 2. YFS-trained writers are now hard at work on these scripts. The School will also deliver the entire post-production for the new season.

YFS students worked closely with NGOs, CSOs and local politicians on four Travelling Cinema Trips to Shan, Chin and Kachin states where they trained around 40 members of local communities to make participatory videos on issues such as mining pollution, drug addiction and environmental damage to Inle Lake. Environmental threats and migration were also themes in projects developed on the Documentary Directing and Development course during which four teams were awarded YFS Fellowships to help take their films into production. All this, along with courses in Film Analysis, Film History, Post-Production, Sound Design and Screenwriting, made it another busy year for the School. With 26 YFS films screening at 48 festivals in 25 countries, and ten of these films winning prizes, the School’s reputation is expanding exponentially as the many students it has trained over the years continue to contribute to the cultural life of Myanmar and, thanks to the YFS Train to Teach programme, teach the next generation of young filmmakers how to use audio-visual media as a means of expression.
Who's Who at YFS?

The Yangon Film School has offices in both Berlin and at the School’s headquarters in Yankin Township in Yangon. In 2016, the YFS Management Team comprised:

**Berlin office**
- Lindsay Morrison: Director
- Franziska Banger: Fund Manager (maternity cover for Helke Schuchhardt)
- Johanna Ruth: Festival Coordinator
- Arlette Heyns: Accountant

**Yangon office**
- Aleksandra Minkiewicz: Country Director (appointed in Nov ’16)
- Ye Kyaw Aung: Logistics
- Naw Hse Htoo Paw: Logistics
- Aye Ni Mar: Accountant
- Salai Samuel: Equipment Manager
- Ta Ra: Assistant Coordinator

**Yangon Film Services**
- Tina Waiwela: Project Manager
- Win Naing Khir: Project Coordinator
- Ta Ra: Production Coordinator
- Ye Kyaw Aung: Logistics
- Naw Hse Htoo Paw: Logistics
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- Aye Ni Mar: Accountant
Dr Aung Min (57) joined YFS in 2007 as a screenwriter. A physician by profession, he combines writing and filmmaking with running a daily clinic in the North Dagon district of Yangon. Following training with YFS and the FAMU film school in Prague, he set up his own filmmaking collective, The Ten Men Group, which makes documentaries and fiction films and runs filmmaking courses across Myanmar. In 2016 he completed the YFS Train to Teach programme for the Film Analysis course. He is now qualified to tutor this course as well as co-tutoring YFS' screenwriting courses. In 2017 his feature film script One Summer Day was presented at Cannes.

What made you apply to YFS?
I wanted to learn screenwriting and filmmaking with European teachers.

Which films have you worked on at YFS?
I wrote the script for The Bamboo Grove (short 'true fictions' film based on Aung Min's experiences as a young doctor in Kayin state) and directed the documentary The Clinic (40 min. documentary about his medical practice). I also wrote a short film Zawana the Novice, which became the feature film screenplay for The Monk (directed by YFS alumnus The Maw Naing, the film premiered at Karlovy Vary Film Festival in 2014 and has won various prizes at festivals across the world).

What is your favourite film?
Tokyo Story by Yasujiro Ozu.

What is your dream job?
To be a teacher of scriptwriting and film analysis.

What are the challenges for filmmakers in Myanmar?
Lack of money!

Are there any challenges to freedom of expression?
The main issues filmmakers are currently facing are fear about how religious and ethnic extremists will react to their work.

How does this affect your work as a filmmaker and/or your future plans?
It is very difficult to shoot in some locations. To take one example, I am developing a feature-length fiction film about a Muslim and a Buddhist in Rakhine state, based on a true story. It is dangerous and often impossible for filmmakers to film in some parts of Rakhine at present.

What effect has the new government had on freedom of expression?
The new censorship laws are too sensitive towards religious sensibilities. Filmmakers are not allowed to criticize religions.

How do you see the future of Myanmar? I think it will improve slowly but steadily.
Yangon Film School draws upon a growing pool of international and Myanmar filmmakers to tutor its courses. The 2016 courses were tutored by (in alphabetical order):

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

**Ellen Bruno / Investigative Documentary**
American documentary filmmaker with a background in relief work, recipient of Guggenheim and Rockefeller Fellowships as well as a Goldie.

**Frances Calvert / Film History**
UK-Australian documentary filmmaker of the award-winning *Cracks in the Mask* (1997) who teaches at Babelsberg Film University near Berlin.

**Joona Louhivuori / Editing**

**Ken Smith / Post-Production**
UK editor, designer and visual VX supremo working for clients including the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Apple and Quantel. Also lectures at UK film schools.

**Rachel Mathews / Screenwriting & Fiction Film Directing**
UK director of award-winning short films who writes feature films as well as radio plays for BBC Radio 4 and is currently developing a TV series.

**Tuula Mehtonen / Editing**
Finnish editor of award-winning documentaries including *Father to Son* (2004) and *Daughters of Palna* (2007).

**Ulrike Schaz / Documentary Filmmaking**
German filmmaker, photographer and international art curator, currently working on an autobiographical feature-length documentary.

**Ansgar Frerich / Postproduction Sound**
German founder-director of BasisBerlin postproduction studio, he won the 2011 the Lola for Best Sound in 2011 and 2015.

**Joona Louhivuori / Editing**

**Ansgar Frerich / Postproduction Sound**
German founder-director of BasisBerlin postproduction studio, he won the 2011 the Lola for Best Sound in 2011 and 2015.

**Ivan Horák / Postproduction Sound**
Czech sound recordist and postproduction sound designer who won the 2014 Czech Lion Award for Best Sound on *The Way Out*.

**David Smith / Post-Production**
UK editor, designer and visual VX supremo working for clients including the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Apple and Quantel. Also lectures at UK film schools.

**Ivan Horák / Postproduction Sound**
Czech sound recordist and postproduction sound designer who won the 2014 Czech Lion Award for Best Sound on *The Way Out*.

**Tin Win Naing / Cinematography**

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

**Frances Calvert / Film History**
UK-Australian documentary filmmaker of the award-winning *Cracks in the Mask* (1997) who teaches at Babelsberg Film University near Berlin.

**Ivan Horák / Postproduction Sound**
Czech sound recordist and postproduction sound designer who won the 2014 Czech Lion Award for Best Sound on *The Way Out*.

**Jack Jenkins Hill / Participatory Video**
UK national based in Myanmar, trained by Insight Share in Cambridge to teach the use of participatory video for community action.

**Kyaw Ko Ko / Sound**
YFS-trained filmmaker, one of the first graduates of the Train to Teach programme who has now joined the School’s roster of tutors.
Student Case Study – Khon Soe Moe Aung

Khon Soe Moe Aung (28) comes from Kayah State and is a passionate human rights activist. He joined YFS in 2014 on the Beginners' Course The Art of Documentary Filmmaking held jointly with the INGO Search for Common Ground. He now divides his time between working for Kayah Earth rights Action Network and sharing his new-found documentary skills with community activists. He is currently researching the longer format documentary In the Dark with the support of a YFS Fellowship.

What made you apply to YFS?
When I was young, I was crazy about art especially creating music, playing the guitar and singing. Later, I became very interested in filmmaking. That's the first reason. The second is that the course was free, so I was very keen to participate!

Which films have you worked on at YFS?
My first film was My Leg (short documentary about war veterans in Kayah State who have opened an artificial leg workshop. It won a Special Mention at Exground International Film Festival in Wiesbaden, Germany in 2015 and Khon Soe Moe Aung travelled to the festival to present his film). I also joined a YFS Travelling Cinema placement in Kachin State and helped a community in Mankhin make two participatory videos.

Which film roles are you focusing on? I'm mainly focusing on directing but I'm also trying to improve my skills in camera and editing.

What are some of your favorite films and why?
I love to watch films based on true stories, like Schindler's List and Hotel Rwanda. I like them because they are historical and also the way they are made: their narrative flow, the conflicts, emotions and how they have a real sense of purpose and are well-constructed.

What are your plans for the future?
I want to be an independent filmmaker in my home state of Kayah and make films that reflect my community's culture, heritage, life styles and political situation. I am developing a feature-length film about the huge development projects and their impact on vulnerable groups in Kayah. My dream job is to become the owner of a film and music production house in my state.

What are the challenges for filmmakers in Myanmar?
There are no good cultural or educational institutions in Myanmar so there are only very limited opportunities for filmmakers to learn. We do not have freedom of expression. Filmmakers are controlled and this limits their art. Thirdly, there is no government support and so it is very hard for ordinary filmmakers to survive and make the films they really want to make. In other countries, artists can receive or borrow money from the government and/or the government creates spaces to enable filmmakers to achieve their ambitions.

What effect has the new government had on freedom of expression?
They lack a mandate and power, so it is very hard for them to improve rights for freedom of expression. At least now, citizens are daring to speak more openly, but unfortunately nothing is being implemented.

How do you see the future of Myanmar?
I think things will stay the same as they are for a long time. If we are able to change the 2008 Constitution, then we will see a better future for Myanmar.

YFS Alumni Destinations / Table I

Annual surveys of YFS alumni reveal the high impact of its trainings with over 80 percent of alumni working in the media they are working in – on one job they may be cameraperson, on the next sound recordist, on the next editor or director, etc. The following figures are taken from a survey undertaken in early 2017 of 149 YFS alumni when the School asked them what they spent most of their time doing in 2016. Because the majority of YFS alumni are freelancers, it is difficult to quantify precisely which area of the media they are working in – on one job they may be cameraperson, on the next sound recordist, on the next editor or director, etc. The following figures are taken from a survey undertaken in early 2017 of 149 YFS alumni when the School asked them what they spent most of their time doing in 2016.

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<th>AREA OF WORK IN 2016</th>
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<th>AREA OF WORK IN 2016</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Journalism (incl. Video Journalist)</td>
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<td>Total Alumni Working in Media</td>
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<td>Editing</td>
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<td>No Contact</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>% Alumni Working in Media</td>
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<td>Non-Film Related Work</td>
<td>7</td>
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Total 149

Because the majority of YFS alumni are freelancers, it is difficult to quantify precisely which area of the media they are working in – on one job they may be cameraperson, on the next sound recordist, on the next editor or director, etc. The following figures are taken from a survey undertaken in early 2017 of 149 YFS alumni when the School asked them what they spent most of their time doing in 2016.
Screenings of YFS Films at Festivals in 2016

TOTAL NUMBER OF YFS FILMS SCREENED: **26**
TOTAL NUMBER OF FESTIVALS: **50**
NO. OF NOMINATIONS: **9**
NO. OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES: **25**

Most screened & Awarded Film: **A Political Life**
7 screenings / 1 nomination / 2 awards
Training Objectives: to introduce the new 2016 intake to the technical, ethical, political, social and artistic challenges of documentary filmmaking. The students were given the chance to experience the roles and work of director, cinematographer and sound recordist.

Description: the course covered the complete process of making a documentary film: from the idea to preproduction, production and post-production. The students were taught and supported as they researched, wrote a treatment, learned how to tell a story in the most effective and appropriate way, managed a budget and then filmed, edited, subtitled and presented their completed films to an audience. Organized into four, three-person crews, the students had the opportunity to experience teamwork and to film in unfamiliar locations.

The course incorporated classroom-based lessons about film analysis and aesthetics and emphasised the value of art as well as film's ability to communicate and bring people together. By working in the three key fields of directing, camera and sound, the students could explore and discover their individual talents, capabilities and skills – all aspects which they will continue to use and develop in their subsequent training with YFS.

Outcomes: the students produced four 5-minute first film exercises, shot footage for the 'All in a Day's Work' module focussing in particular on observational filming, and produced four final films of c. 15 minutes in length, as follows:

- The Animal Lover – all creatures great and small fascinate 22-year-old Shine Htet Aung who makes a living sterilising Yangon’s stray dogs to save them from extermination.
- Through Thick and Thin – an intimate portrait of a patchwork family living in a tiny hut surrounded by the huge piles of garbage they collect as municipal workers in Yangon.
- Buy, Sell, Resell – a look at the famous flea market on Shwe Bon Tha Street in downtown Yangon where all manner of bric-a-brac is passionately acquired, recycled and re-sold.
- Tofu Nights – a long day’s night for the workers at Yangon’s ‘top’ tofu factory. A hot and laborious job, from dusk till dawn.

These final four films and the first exercises will be released on a compilation DVD along with a film about this course and a host of other films about the School’s many other courses in 2017.
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Travelling Cinema Trips to Chin, Kachin and Shan States

In 2016 and early 2017 YFS students who had been trained on one of YFS’ annual Participatory Video (PV) courses (see p. 18 below) worked closely with local partners to facilitate participatory processes in local communities in four remote rural locations as part of the School’s ongoing Travelling Cinema project.

During these placements, Travelling Cinema crews worked with local participants to help them identify topics, plan, storyboard, film and edit nine short films. Crews then helped participants to hold community screenings and discussions about the films they had made. These discussions fed into Action Plans drawn up by participants and YFS crews at the end of each trip. These plans focused on distributing PVs to the media and local and national decision makers. Follow-up trips to the same locations were (or will be) made to maintain contact with targeted communities and ensure that Action Plans are pursued.

1. Aung Ban near Kalaw in Shan State: 10-27 March 2016 (14 days)
   - 11 Danu and Shan participants (7 male, 4 female); two PV films made:
     - Dirty Water – a Danu community describes how mining pollution is affecting their lives
     - A Tea Planter’s Struggles – a Shan community discusses how to break down barriers to making a living from agriculture
   - The YFS crew held screenings with activists, local community members and officials. Discussion focused on how to resolve issues caused by mining waste. An Action Plan was drawn up to seek ways of improving the situation. DVDs of both films were also sent to NGOs and the state government.

2. Hnaring Village near Hakha in Chin State: 18-28 May 2016 (11 days)
   - 13 Chin participants (7 male, 6 female); three PV films made:
     - Job Opportunities – a dramatised documentary describing the lack of transparency in assigning the few jobs available to young people in Chin State, and the need for behavioural change to prevent emigration
     - No Water, No Light – a portrayal of a typical day for one family in Hnaring village as they struggle with no amenities
     - Time to Change – Hnaring community members discuss the challenges of life without electricity and running water and explore solutions
   - DVDs of all three films are being distributed to the regional government and local organisations working on the relevant issues, including church networks.

3. Than Pe Village near Mankhin in Kachin State: 10-24 December 2016 (12 days)
   - 12 participants (7 female, two living in IDP camps, 5 male); two PV films made:
     - Myitsone Forever – people living at the Ayeyarwaddy River confluence describe the threats to their environment as a result of mining pollution, over-fishing and littering
     - Our Culture – a film about traditional Lisu cultural practices and efforts to rekindle interest amongst the younger generation
   - The YFS crew and participants are working with organisations tackling threats to the Ayeyarwaddy to ensure that the films reach state government and local TV. Films will also be screened at cultural events promoting ethnic rights and diversity in Kachin State.

   - 12 Intha and Kayah participants (9 male, 3 female); two PV films made:
     - The Clean Team – about threats to Inle lake from uncontrolled littering and local initiatives to change behaviour
     - Traditional Leg-Rowing at Inle Lake – about the decline of leg-rowing and the effect of climate change and pollution on the lake as a result of motorised transportation.
The Art of Documentary Editing – An Introduction

25 April – 22 May 2016 at the YFS House, Yangon

Tutor: Joona Louhivuori (Finland)
Participants: 12 students from the 2016 intake plus six students from the 2014 Beginners’ course (8 men and 10 women) of mixed ethnicities

Training Objectives: to give newer YFS students a basic understanding of the technical, organisational and storytelling aspects of digital documentary film editing according to international standards.

Description: during the course, special emphasis was given to finding inspiration and using a creative approach to any given material. Multiple examples of different footage were screened to demonstrate the importance of emotion in cinematic storytelling. Material for the editing exercises, which formed the practical component of the training, was taken from the ‘Rill in a Day’s Work’ documentary exercises filmed during the 2016 Beginners’ course (see p. 12 above) and from the YFS documentary Lovely Bones. The course consisted of:

- classroom lectures on technical and organisational aspects (following the natural workflow of the documentary editing process), basic editing rules and dramatic structure
- hands-on exercises on preparatory steps: setting up the edit suite, creating a new project, capturing and organising the material, the editing process itself
- one-to-one tutoring of the students in the editing rooms as they worked on their practical exercises
- group screenings and discussions of rushes and the edited exercises
- screenings and analysis of documentaries and fiction films edited by the tutor, YFS students and other professionals. Post-screening discussions were an essential part of every screening

As part of the School’s Train to Teach programme, the international tutor was assisted by four experienced YFS editing students who worked closely with the beginner editors as they developed their skills and, in doing so, had the opportunity to consolidate their own knowledge and develop their confidence in a teaching situation.

‘The main issues filmmakers are currently facing are fear about how religious and ethnic extremists will react to their work.’
Dr Aung Min, YFS Alumni and Screenwriting Tutor
Training Objectives: to train YFS documentary filmmakers in how to facilitate a participatory video workshop in preparation for their field trips on the Travelling Cinema project (see p. 14 above). Participatory video (PV) uses video as a tool to explore subjects and share perspectives amongst participants and, where appropriate and in accordance with the participants’ wishes, with the wider community and beyond.

Description: the training aimed to be empowering and transformative for the students and to add value to YFS in its broader work with young people. It was delivered in 4 parts via intensive experiential learning in a very practical course which required a high level of commitment:

Part 1 – Exercises for technical skills development and video production: during the first four days the trainees had hands-on experience of the various methods for group-based learning and video-making.

Part 2 – Field-based practice: the workshop-based training was complemented by a field-based opportunity for the trainees to practice the techniques they had just learnt in two groups of 12 participants each. Four trainees worked with young people in the Shwe Pyi Tha community theatre programme established by United-ACT; the other four worked with youth volunteers of the Kachin Peace Network campaign group in San Chaung. During these fieldwork assignments, the YFS students facilitated a short, 2-day participatory video process, supporting their participants in developing basic technical filmmaking skills and planning and producing a short video on a topic of their choosing.

Part 3 – Reflection, participatory editing and participatory video screenings: the students reflected upon and shared with the wider group what they had learned during the fieldwork period. They then edited the footage filmed by their participants and learned how to successfully plan for, prepare and facilitate participatory video screening events. At the end of the course they practiced their screening and discussion skills by facilitating a video screening with participants and stakeholders in Shwe Pyi Tha.

Part 4 – Participatory video project design and management: in the final part of the course students learned the key points in participatory project design and management, including participant selection; free, prior and informed consent; video topic selection; timetabling and how to adapt the participatory video process to diverse aims (knowledge/skills sharing; community mobilisation; advocacy/reaching decision-makers). They also prepared for their upcoming YFS Travelling Cinema assignments.
Documentary Directing & Development Course
/ 10 – 22 June 2015 at the YFS House, Yangon

Tutors: Ellen Bruno (USA)

Participants: nineteen YFS multi-ethnic filmmakers and/or journalists (11 women and 8 men)

Training Objectives: to train the participants in how to conceive and develop longer (60-100 min) documentary films addressing some of Myanmar’s pressing social issues during the country’s period of transition. These documentaries should have the potential to gain local and international distribution as well as becoming tools for advocating social change within Myanmar itself.

Description: students were selected on the strength of their submitted proposals. The course then focussed on developing these ideas through research and each student was supported in writing a short proposal. Participants also learned how to craft a verbal funding ‘pitch’.

The course combined lectures, in-class writing exercises, discussions about the documentary form and the skills required to become a successful documentary filmmaker. Screenings of a wide range of documentaries and guest speakers in the form of filmmakers from the concurrent Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival challenged and inspired the students.

At the end of the course participants presented a four-minute verbal pitch of their project to a YFS Fellowship Panel of three judges. The panel awarded two top-tier fellowships and two mid-level fellowships of financial support for the continued development of four documentary projects. The chosen projects, which represent a wide range of issues and are located in regions throughout Myanmar, are:

Time to Change by Aung Nwai Htway and Maw Si (1,200 Euros)
A Yangon-set documentary looking at a range of issues – including out-of-control car ownership, unlawful real estate development and bribery in public office – which encourages the city’s inhabitants to find ways to address the problems they are facing.

Cocoons by Thae Zar Chi Khaing and Cherry Thein (1,200 Euros)
Exploring the lives of girls living on the streets of Mandalay who are often drawn into lives of addiction and crime and looking at how one initiative – the Shwechinthae Child Development Centre in Shwebo – is enabling some of these children to gain an education and reconnect with society.

Fade Away by Eim Chan Thar and Aye Nilar Kyaw (2,400 Euros)
Made by ethnic Kayin filmmakers, this project is set in the ‘conservative’ Kayin village of Hti Lal Chaw and observes how the traditional ways of life and cultural practices of the Talaku are being lost in the name of development.

Black Gold by Arrow Luck (2,400 Euros)
Since oil workers in Chauk were fired after going on strike 40 years ago, the community has been too fearful to protest about dangerous working practices and slave-labour wages in an industry which annually brings the government and cartels millions of dollars.

The filmmakers of these four projects will receive e-mentoring and benefit from follow-up, face-to-face tutoring in 2017 to ensure the continued development and production of their projects.
How Films Work: Film Analysis Course

11 – 30 July 2016 at the YFS House, Yangon

Tutor: Dr Aung Min (Myanmar) and Tuula Mehtonen (Finland) in the role of observer

Participants: 20 YFS students (12 beginners and eight more advanced students, 11 women and nine men) from various ethnicities and religions

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

Description: the course opened with general lectures on the emotions, film characters and how to create opportunities for identification. Still photographs helped the students to connect emotions with images and to understand simple structural forms. Carlos Saura’s film Cria Cuervos (Raise Ravens, 1976, Spain) was used as an example for all the lectures and the film’s structure and cinematic elements were deconstructed on a timeline by the tutor. The students were then split into groups and each group was set the task of analysing one of the following six films – all of which were specifically chosen for their contrasting nationalities, dramaturgies and filmmaking techniques. After completing a detailed analysis of their specific film over several days, each group then presented their findings to the rest of the class.

1. Ida by Pawlikowski (2013, Poland)
2. 4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days by Cristian Mungiu (2007, Romania)
3. Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring by Kim Ki-Duk (2003, South Korea)
4. The Straight Story by David Lynch (1999, USA)
5. Leviathan by Andrey Zvyagintsev (2014, Russia)
6. Winter Sleep by Nuri Bilge Ceylan (2014, Turkey)

Train-to-Teach Participant becomes a YFS Tutor: this was the third time local trainer Dr Aung Min (see profile on p. 5 above) taught this course alongside the international tutor as part of the YFS Train to Teach programme. On this occasion, Aung Min led the course in the Myanmar language with the international tutor observing (via a translator). He has now graduated from the Train to Teach programme and is qualified to teach the next edition of this course on his own.
Tutors: Frances Calvert (Australia)

Participants: nine men and eight women – a mix of the new intake and more experienced students – from a mix of ethnicities and religions

Training Objectives: this course was designed with film practitioners in mind to teach them a language with which to think and talk about their craft and art, describing how to ‘read’, analyse and understand films, in other words, to improve their cine-literacy.

Description: the course was divided into seven main subject areas:

1. History of Cinematography – including Realism, Expressionism, the ‘New Objectivity’ in the city films of the 1920s; analysis of shots, angles, lighting and colour, lenses and filters, and the work of great cinematographers

Mise-en-Scène – with a close analysis of Citizen Kane by Orson Welles plus composition, territorial space and proxemic patterns

2. History of Movement – including the moving camera (pans, tilts, cranes, dolly shots) and the mechanical distortions of movement

3. History of Editing – including montage with a special look at D W Griffith’s developments in editing and the Soviet montage of Eisenstein

4. History of Sound – with the historical background, use of sound effects and musical scores, song, sound tracks and the spoken language

5. History of Documentary Film – looking at Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, Harry Watt, Cinema vérité, Direct Cinema, Free Cinema and parodic and reflexive documentary

6. New Cinemas in Developing Countries – with a particular analysis of the films of Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami

Outcomes: by the end of the course, the 17 participants were better skilled at watching, describing and explaining the development of film language and judging how films work. By studying film masterpieces of the past 122 years, the students developed an appreciation of different approaches to cinematography, composition, editing, sound, etc. They were exposed to great films from around the world that covered a wide range of topics as well as illustrating film form and style. The students used their newly acquired analytical skills to make detailed analyses of films.

Subtitling Classic Films into Burmese: for the first time in 2016 the course was complemented by screening three classic feature films which YFS, supported by the Goethe Institut Myanmar had subtitled into Burmese. This enabled the students to achieve a much richer and fuller understanding of these films:

• Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans by F W Murnau (Germany, 1927) – a classic of late silent movie art (with intertitles)

• Laura by Otto Preminger (USA, 1944) – an archetypal film noir starring Gene Tierney during the height of the Hollywood studio system

• Behold a Pale Horse by Fred Zinnemann (USA, 1964) – a drama about the consequences of the Spanish Civil War

YFS is determined to subtitle further classic films into Myanmar to benefit not only of the School’s own students but also the country’s wider film-going public. The next film to be subtitled in this project is Orson Welles’ unparalleled Citizen Kane (USA, 1941).
Participants: Building upon the introductory module offered to participants during the Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners (see p. 12 above) this course trained the 24 participants – 12 women and 8 men, a mix of the new intake and more seasoned students – in the following key areas:

1. Final Cut Pro to Premiere Pro Editing Software Crossover Training: following the discontinuation of the Final Cut Pro (FCP) non-linear editing software, YFS made the decision to move to Adobe Premiere Pro which is now considered the industry standard (alongside Avid Media Composer). Premiere Pro was chiefly chosen because its operational philosophy is similar to FCP, enabling a smoother transition for YFS staff and students. The course provided an introduction and intensive training in the new software with the tutor on hand to troubleshoot any teething problems in implementing it across the School.

2. Collaboration and Leadership: students were encouraged to consider post-production as part of the entire process of film and TV production (and not just the final stage) and to become true collaborators rather than just efficient/useful technicians. In particular, the students were empowered to take charge, deal effectively with directors and producers, develop more efficient subtitling strategies and work towards getting a cut ‘locked’. The importance of storytelling and the relationship between the editor and director were examined as well as the necessity of working creatively with sound in the editing and soundtrack design. The role of the online editor/colourist was investigated in depth, enabling participants to take a locked film through the final stages of post-production and on to exhibition.

3. Online Editing and Colour Grading: the students were introduced to the art and craft of professional picture finishing to produce films of exhibition quality. Underpinning the teaching of techniques was an investigation into the technical competencies required to work successfully with the increasingly wide range of camera formats and deliverables.

4. Bringing It All Together – Real World Projects: intrinsic to the teaching delivery were case studies and prepared projects that could be taken to completion outside the classroom.
The Art of Sound Design

/ 19 September – 15 October at the YFS House, Yangon

Tutors: Ivan Horák (Czech Republic) and Ansgar French (Germany) alongside Local Sound Design Trainers Kyaw Ko Ko and Sylne Mon

Participants: six men and four women from various ethnic backgrounds and religions.

Note: Following a lack of female sound trainees in editions of this course during previous years, the School was pleased to successfully recruit more women for the 2016 course.

Training Objectives: in a country where sound design for film is still the exception rather than the rule, this month-long course had three main aims:

1. To introduce beginners and broaden the knowledge and skills base of more experienced students and local tutors in the aesthetic and practical aspects of sound postproduction in both documentary and fiction film and to emphasise ‘The Power of Sound’ in filmmaking.

2. To mix the sound on eight short films and one evaluation film created during the Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners’ course (see p. 12 above) and to mix the sound and add music and sound effects to the two short films made during the 2015 True Fictions course.

3. To train students in field music recording – in 2016 this took place in a medium-sized church with a chamber orchestra. Recordings were also made of the students improvising on various instruments and objects. The field recordings were made in Surround Sound 5.0.

Training Description: topics covered in the lectures and practical exercises included:

- the use of ProTools and other DAW systems, editing sounds, timeline, plugins, offline and real-time editing, routing options
- basic functions of EQ, Multiband Compressor, Spectral Repair and Noiseprint Tools
- Dolby systems 5.1, 7.1 and Dolby Atmos, professional layouts and studio examples
- studio recording and mixing tools using the most up-to-date equipment and software
- sampling and virtual instruments
- dialogue editing and de-noising
- recording ADRs (Automatic Dialogue Replacement)
- Foleys – what they are and how to create them plus sound design and Hard FX
- use of ambiances including multichannel and FX ambiances
- emotional sound design and the borders between sound design and music
- re-recording on various formats: mono, stereo, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1
- how to mix Surround Sound

Whilst mixing the short documentaries and fiction films, the students worked closely with the directors of the films and hence also learned another key element of sound design: how to communicate effectively about sound with sound non-professionals.

As part of the YFS Train to Teach Programme, two experienced YFS sound design students taught alongside the international tutors.

During the course the international tutors also arranged for the students and local trainers to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of an international industry association: the Audio Engineering Society (Myanmar branch).
The Art of Screenwriting for Beginners
24 October – 4 November at the YFS House, Yangon

Tutors: Rachel Matthews (UK) and Dr Aung Min (Myanmar)

Participants: thirteen writers (three men and ten women), a mix of new and more experienced YFS students as well as journalists and writers of fiction and poetry

Training Objectives: 2-week course was designed to teach the aesthetics and practicalities of writing a short fictional screenplay to writers and filmmakers who had experience in other fields of writing and/or the media but who had never previously written a film script.

Description: for the first time in 2016, applicants to the course were given a broad topic for a film story, namely ‘Change in Myanmar’. Participants were selected by the tutors chiefly for the strength of their script idea. The course then focussed on helping the students to develop their individual ideas into first draft screenplays.

In Week 1 the tutors supported the students as they built upon and refined their story ideas, working on the characters, central conflict, 3-act structure, identifying the ‘dramatic question’ of the script and seeing how the story could be told in the most visual way possible. To inform this work, tutors and students watched and analysed ten prize-winning short films from around the world and the students then worked together to identify the shared characteristics of stories which work successfully in the short film format.

All students ended Week 1 with a step outline (scene by scene breakdown) of their script. Towards the end of the week, each student had the opportunity for a one-to-one meeting with both tutors to discuss their step outlines and to try to solve any issues they had with their stories.

In Week 2 the tutors and students discussed techniques for writing successful screen dialogue and analysed a further five short films with a particular emphasis on dialogue. The students then developed their step outlines into first draft scripts. On the final two days of the course, the students read/acted out their scripts in front of the class and discussed them in detail, receiving feedback from the rest of the group and the tutors. Each student ended the course with a clear action plan for how to rewrite their script and develop it further.

Key topics discussed and practised on the course included:
- techniques for creating interesting and memorable screen characters
- telling a story primarily through images
- how stories can be structured – including the traditional 3-act structure and other, less traditional forms of storytelling
- the shared characteristics of successful short films
- writing concise and effective screen dialogue
- formatting scripts to industry standards
- things to consider when developing and redrafting a script
- working effectively with directors and producers
- how to turn a screenplay into a short film

The chief output of the course was the first drafts of 13 short film scripts on the topic of ‘Change in Myanmar’. Some of these scripts have strong potential to be made into short films, including:

- Field by Khin Minn Soe – based on the true story of the writer’s grandmother, the screenplay is set during the former military dictatorship and depicts a stubborn and brave old woman daring to challenge a village headman when she refuses to take part in ‘voluntary’ forced labour.
- Coming Out by Thae Zar Chi Khaing – again inspired by real-life incidents, the screenplay is about a lesbian who is fearful of coming out to her family. Torn between wanting to please her parents and her girlfriend, she has to find a way to live life on her own terms.
- Home by Eim Chan Thar - an old man returns to his home village after years spent in a camp for ‘internally displaced people’ and discovers that his house is now occupied by a new family. Will he claim back what he believes is rightfully his?
Docuanimation Course

/ 22 November 2016 – 6 January 2017 at the YFS House, Yangon

Tutors: Paromita Vohra (India) and Lisa Crafts (USA)

Participants: five women and four men – YFS film students, journalists and one student from the National University of Arts and Culture (NUAC), all from various ethnic backgrounds

Training Objectives: in consultation with Myanmar’s Gender Equality Network (GEN), and supported by the Heinrich Boell Foundation and SIDA, this YFS animation-documentary training aimed to produce three short docuanimations on gender-based violence (GBV) in Myanmar.

Training Description: the course began with a one-day workshop led by GEN providing a total of 24 YFS students with an understanding of how gender and social conditioning express themselves in individual stories, behaviour and emotions. This provided a strong foundation for the nine docuanimation students as they undertook research and identified protagonists. In this they were guided by award-winning filmmaker, writer and gender activist from India, Paromita Vohra. In the second part of the course, award-winning US filmmaker, animator and educator Lisa Crafts taught the students a variety of animation techniques suited to the individual stories.

Topics covered in the course included:
• an examination of the students’ own lives in the context of gender-based violence
• how to identify a promising story and subject during research
• research and interview techniques for personal documentary narratives
• how to determine the core narrative and create an emotional arc in a short-form film
• why docuanimation is a good tool for engaging an audience in topics that may be difficult to film and/or difficult to watch
• how to balance emotional and factual aspects
• different uses of sound in communicating emotion and drama in an audio-narrative
• how to use elements of visual style to complement rather than illustrate audio-narrative
• combining music, sound and image to create powerful works that educate and encourage conversation and action

Each of the three one-minute docuanimation films created on the course focused on a different aspect of GBV, with the aim of making the audience look at the issue afresh and connect to it personally:

Domestic Violence – a successful businesswoman is beaten by her husband. Set in an upper-middle-class household, the film also dispels the stereotype that domestic violence only happens among the poor and/or uneducated.

Sexual Violence – a woman who was raped by a man in her neighbourhood and her struggle to overcome despair and the insensitivity of society towards her situation. The film focusses on the fact that the rapist is often known to the victim and deals with victim-blaming.

Cyber Violence – a woman’s ex-boyfriend makes private pictures and information public, inviting virtual mob violence and relentless harassment. The film examines consent and the backlash that occurs when a woman acts with a sense of agency in her intimate life. As lives are increasingly lived online, this film reflects a growing experience among young women.

‘YFS is a remarkable School... I have never been to a place that has such a culture of community, seriousness and dedication – and the warmth of a family. It’s a rare culture that has grown here and I have great admiration for it.’

YFS Tutor for Animation Lisa Crafts, award-winning animator and lecturer at Pratt and Harvard Universities, USA
Mi Mi Lwin – YFS Student Case Study

Mi Mi Lwin (25) joined YFS in 2014. She comes from Nyaung Oo Township in Mandalay Division in the central dry zone where her parents are toddy palm farmers, as depicted in her lovingly filmed documentary portrait of them, Sugar & Spice. The film won the Ruby Award in the 2015 Goethe Institute Documentary Awards, Best South East Asian Film Award at the 2016 Wathann Film Festival in Yangon and has screened at international festivals including the prestigious IDFA in Amsterdam. In 2016 Mi Mi travelled outside of Myanmar for the first time to present her film at IDFA.

What made you join YFS?

I love the arts and I want to be a professional artist. YFS is the only film school in Myanmar where I can learn filmmaking at an international level.

What films have you worked on at YFS?

In my first year I directed the short documentary Laundry Lady. In my second year I directed and edited Sugar & Spice. I also edited The Gatekeeper and Animal Lover (both 2016 Beginners’ films) as well as two films about the 2015 True Fictions and 2016 Docuanimation courses. I was also sound recordist on the short documentaries Music Lover and The Bus Conductor and two commissioned films: Now I Can Read for the European Union and a promotional film Bank with Us for GIZ.

Which film role(s) are you focussing on? Editing, directing and sound recording.

What is your favourite film and why?

My current favourite is Water by Deepa Mehta. I like the fact that the topic of gender discrimination in India is quite similar to the situation in Myanmar. It’s a very emotional film and the camera and lighting work are really interesting.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to become a professional filmmaker and editor. I intend to focus on being a YFS student director during the next two years so I can benefit from the mentoring by the international editing tutors. 

What are the challenges for filmmakers in Myanmar?

There is no government funding for filmmakers so a big problem is the lack of financial support. Another problem is that when some Myanmar people see filmmakers with their camera and sound equipment, there are always lots of questions because people used to be afraid of the previous government concerning filming. And there are still negative views about female filmmakers with people questioning if women are actually capable of making films.

Are there any challenges to freedom of expression? Yes, some, but nowadays there are many more rights than there used to be.

What effect has the new government had on freedom of expression?

Under this new state government, there is much more freedom of media and expression for the public.

How do you see the future of Myanmar? I hope Myanmar will become much better in the future. Things have already improved during the current democratic government. We have to wait and see and be patient for a better future in the country.

Screenwriting Mentorship: The Sun, The Moon & The Truth

/ November 2016 – June 2017 at the YFS House, Yangon and via e-mentoring

Tutors: Rachel Mathews (UK)

Participants: six female Myanmar writers

In 2014 YFS pursued a successful collaboration with the British Council-funded NGO Pyoe Pin on the first series of The Sun, the Moon & the Truth, a TV series in the ‘edutainment’ genre designed to teach a predominantly rural TV audience about the rule of law. On that occasion, YFS undertook the editing and post-production for the series. In 2016 the School was approached by Pyoe Pin and the NGO MyJustice who had joined the consortium managing the drama to work on the scripts for the second series. To this end, YFS screenwriting mentor Rachel Mathews selected six Myanmar writers trained on previous YFS screenwriting courses and worked closely with them to develop the six storylines which the two NGOs had identified as being key to the second series. The six stories featured are:

Ep.1 – Money-Lending: issues arising from illegal practices in the informal money-lending market and a demonstration of how micro-credit organisations can protect borrowers

Ep.2 – Citizenship/ID: tackling the vexed issue of the different levels of citizenship and difficulties in obtaining the ID card that is essential for work, travel and access to services in Myanmar

Ep.3 – Corruption & Whistle-Blowing: exploring bribery and other corrupt practices in the civil service and introducing the concept of whistle-blowing and the protection of whistle-blowers

Ep.4 – Drug Addiction: promoting the idea that drug addiction is a public health issue more than a crime and demonstrating the effectiveness of treatment programmes for drug addicts

Ep.5 – Sexual Violence: arguing that sexual violence is a legal matter better dealt with by the courts than by informal arrangements and speaking out against the culture of victim-blaming

Ep.6 – Land-Grabbing: showing how a community can come together and use legal and political methods alongside the media to resist illegal developments and the misappropriation of land

After writing Draft 1 of the scripts, the writers came together at YFS for three days of script readings with representatives from NGOs and CSOs working in the areas addressed in the stories. These experts gave extensive feedback on the scripts and subsequently kept in touch as the scripts were developed. These experts will also work with YFS to build and engage audiences when Season 2 is screened on TV stations across Myanmar in 2018. YFS partners on this project include:

• NGOs and CSOs working in the field of justice including MyJustice, Pyoe Pin, the Access to Justice Initiative and The Yangon Justice Centre
• BRAC micro-finance initiative
• Organisations working for the rights of women, LGBTI people and the disabled including the Gender Equality Network (GEN), Akaya Women, Kachin Women’s Peace Network, Colours Rainbow, Equality Myanmar, Myanmar Independent Living Initiative
• Medical organisations including Médecins du Monde, the Drug User Network, the Drug Policy Advocacy Group
• PEN Myanmar
• Action Aid
• Oxfam
• Myanmar film producer Grace Swe Zin Htaik
• Myanmar film director Aung Ko Latt

This project is supported by the British Council’s Live and Learn Initiative.
In 2009 YFS introduced its Train to Teach programme in which more experienced students are mentored by international tutors to learn how to teach the next generation of Myanmar filmmakers. In a three-year programme, student trainers begin by shadowing international tutors to become familiar with YFS course content and teaching methods before taking on an increasing amount of responsibility to deliver the School’s curriculum. The student trainers are observed and assessed by international tutors and receive feedback. At the end of the programme, successful student trainers are qualified to apply for positions to teach YFS courses within their area of expertise.

During the School’s 2016 curriculum, the following students continued to train or completed the Train to Teach programme:

1. Wai Mar Nyunt, Shin Daewe and Khin Myanmar were directing mentors on the Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners
2. Min Yan Thaik and Zaw Lar were respectively camera and sound trainees on the Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners, supervised by YFS graduates from the Train to Teach programme Tin Win Naing (camera) and Kyaw Ko Ko (sound)
3. Mi Mi Lwin (see p. 34 above), Soe Arkar Htun, May Htoo Cho, Zin Mar Oo and Sai Nyi Nyi were student editors on the Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners
4. Dr Aung Min (see p.5 above) was adjunct tutor on the Film Analysis course. He has now graduated from the programme and is qualified to teach the next edition of this course on his own.
5. Slyne Mon, Kyaw Ko Ko and local trainers alongside two international tutors on the Art of Sound Design course

‘There are still negative views about female filmmakers with people asking if women are actually capable of making films.’

Mi Mi Lwin, third year YFS student and winner of multiple awards for her film Sugar & Spice
Summary of 2016 Training Statistics

### 2016 YFS Students by Religion

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### 2016 YFS Students by Ethnicity

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Non-Bamar</td>
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YFS Training Courses in 2017

Due to the funding shortfall that the School is currently facing (see p. 60 below), YFS is unfortunately unable to offer as many training courses as it has in recent years. However, in 2017 the School will be focussing on what happens to a film after it has been shot i.e. upon the editing process and the rest of the post-production work, including sound design. In addition, following the highly successful introduction of the Docuanimation genre into the School’s curriculum in 2016, YFS will be running its second edition of this course in 2017.

1  3 July – 19 August / Advanced Editing Course
Seven-weeks residential
After having the chance to use YFS equipment to go out across Myanmar and film a documentary topic of their own choosing, 12 teams of second-year directors and editors will receive intensive mentoring from an international editing tutor, supported by YFS editing alumni in the School’s Teach to Train programme, to edit their films into documentaries of 15-30 minutes in length. The focus will be on helping directors and editors to collaborate closely and develop their own storytelling style and voice. It is estimated that 8 documentaries on the topic of Women and Peace in Myanmar will be completed on the course.

2  21 August – 16 September / Post-Production Coaching
Four-weeks non-residential
The directors and editors participating in the Advanced Editing Course will then work on the locked-off cuts of their films to complete their works to an international standard, including adding titles, credits and subtitles, colour grading and preparing the films for sound design.

3  02 – 28 October / Sound Design
Four-weeks non-residential
Participants in the above two courses will work closely with YFS sound design students – supervised by an international sound tutor and two local trainers – to complete the track-laying and sound post-production for their documentaries, including the addition of music and other special sound effects.

4  December 2017 - January 2018 (tbc) / Docuanimation
Ten-week non-residential / tbc
At least nine YFS students will learn a variety of techniques to combine animation and documentary in order to create four short films on the topics of women and peace and gender-based violence.

5  December 2017 – January 2018 (tbc) / The Yangon Film School Travelling Cinema Project Outreach
An outreach project of screenings, discussions and participatory video facilitations in remote rural and/or peri-urban locations which aims to give a voice to marginalised communities. At least one Travelling Cinema trip will take place in 2017.
Films Produced

In 2016, YFS students made and/or facilitated the creation of a total of 32 films and completed 18 shorter exercises as follows:

- four short exercise films, four longer (c. 15 min) final films plus footage shot during the ‘All in a Day’s Work’ cinematography and sound module on the Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners course
- nine participatory videos (including two made in early 2017) facilitated during four Travelling Cinema Trips to Chin, Kachin and Shan States
- 18 short edited film exercises completed on the Art of Documentary Editing: An Introduction Course
- two participatory videos completed on the Participatory Video Facilitators’ Training course
- three 1-minute animated documentaries on the topic of gender-based violence made on the Docuanimation course
- ten short films made about the Yangon Film School’s courses in 2016

These films will be released in a combination of single and compilation DVDs in 2017 and will be distributed to funders, NGOs, CSOs, the filmmakers themselves as well as entering selected films for screening at film festivals across the globe.

‘Scholarships are essential for film courses in Myanmar because we cannot afford to pay high fees to study. It meant I could leave my job. I will always be grateful to YFS for giving me this chance.’

Thae Zar Chi Khaing, second year YFS student
Films in Development

In 2016 YFS students developed a total of 22 film projects as follows:

- eight longer-form (60-100 min) documentary projects on the Documentary Directing & Development course. Following a pitching competition at the end of the course, four of these projects received financial support in the form of a YFS Fellowship Award.

- thirteen short fiction film screenplays on the Art of Screenwriting for Beginners Course.

- one feature-length feature film, The Man in the Room by Cham Myaye Kyaw. This project won the YFS Feature Screenplay Development Award in July 2015 and the writer was supported in the further development of the project throughout 2016.

Film Commissions for NGOs and Other Clients

In 2016 a total of 16 YFS students and alumni were able to earn income working as freelance crew members and filmmakers on eight projects overseen by the School’s production company, the social enterprise Yangon Film Services. The production company was commissioned by a number of high-profile national and international NGOs and other organisations including the EU delegation to Myanmar, Germany’s GIZ, the Embassy of Switzerland and USAID. Productions included:

- Bank with Us: an educational film on sales and marketing for banks. 20-minute educational video commissioned by German development agency GIZ about how Myanmar banks can promote sales and marketing.

- Earn As You Learn. 12-minute documentary for the Embassy of Switzerland about how effective vocational training can be a significant driver of progress in Myanmar.

- Mapping Our Land: Strengthening Land Tenure in Myanmar. 15-minute documentary about USAID’s Land Tenure Project to support communities and organizations with tools that explain customary and traditional rights, promote good management, and strengthen cooperation on land issues.
Screening YFS films at national and international festivals helps raise the School’s profile and promote the work of its filmmakers. Festival screenings also help YFS convey the information about democracy and diversity contained in its films and to raise international awareness about the lives and concerns of Myanmar citizens, including the urban and rural poor and marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

In 2016, 26 YFS films screened at 48 festivals in 25 different countries including Finland, India, USA, UK, Greece, Laos, Germany, Japan and New Zealand. The School’s films won a total of 10 prizes and 15 students had the opportunity to travel with their films to attend a festival in person. Among the School’s most successful festival films of 2016 were:

**A Political Life** (20 min documentary directed by Soe Arkar Htun)
The story of one of Aung San Suu Kyi’s bodyguards who gave up his political work for his long-suffering wife. At just 19 years old, Soe Arkar Htun was YFS’ youngest filmmaker when he made this, his debut film. He won Filmmaker of the Future Award at the Watersprite International Student Film Festival in Cambridge, UK, and the film won the Golden Comma at the Alpavirama Asian Short and Documentary Film Festival in India as well as being nominated for the Best Asian Documentary at the Salaya Documentary Film Festival in Thailand. In 2016 Soe Arkar Htun had the opportunity to travel to Kyoto and Tokyo in Japan and to Bangkok in Thailand to present his film.

**Sugar & Spice** (15 min documentary directed by Mi Mi Lwin)
This lovingly filmed portrait depicts the filmmaker’s own parents living in the central dry zone who eke out a living making ‘jaggery’, sweets made from toddy palm syrup. In 2016 the film won the Best South East Asian Film Award at the Wathann Film Festival in Yangon. It was also nominated for the best SEA Documentary Award at the Singapore International Film Festival and for the Best Student Documentary Award at IDFA, the International Documentary Festival in Amsterdam, one of the most high-profile and prestigious documentary festivals in the world. Mi Mi Lwin travelled to both Singapore and Amsterdam to present her film.

**Lovely Bones** (16 min documentary directed by Nwaye Zar Che Soe)
A sensitive depiction of Pauk Gyi, a ferryman who has been disabled from birth and is unable to use his legs. The filmmaker is also a disabilities rights’ activist and co-founder of MILI (Myanmar Independent Living Initiative). The film won the Voice of America Award at the Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival in Yangon and the Best Student Film Award at the Woodpecker International Film Festival in New Delhi, India.

**Most screened & Awarded Film: A Political Life**
7 screenings / 1 nomination / 2 awards

Films screened in 2016: 26 / 9 nominations in 25 different countries

Winning 10 prizes

YFS Films and Students at Festivals in 2016
YFS held its second annual Open Day in July 2016, throwing open the doors of the School building it rents at 5 Mya Yadanar Road, Pyi Thayar Avenue, Yankin Township, to over 120 people – including members of the EU Delegation to Myanmar and partner organisation Goethe-Institut as well as government and cultural actors from the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation, the Myanmar Motion Picture Development Department, local and international filmmakers, potential students and people from the local community.

Various rooms were dedicated to different areas of filmmaking including editing, sound design and cinematography. Students and tutors were on hand to discuss their specialisations, demonstrate the School’s filmmaking equipment and provide information about YFS training courses and how to apply to the School. The upstairs teaching room hosted screenings throughout the day with YFS filmmakers in attendance to participate in Q&As following their own films. These screenings included:

- **My Leg** (16’, dir: Khon Soe Moe Aung) – award-winning documentary about a prosthetics workshop set up by former enemies in Kayah state for people suffering the consequences of the conflict which has raged there for over 60 years
- **Tyres** (32’, dir: Kyaw Myo Lwin) – beautifully shot in black and white, a poetic documentary about a tyre-recycling workshop in Yangon
- **H is for Home** (7’, dir: Tin Win Naing) – an NGO film made for CARE Myanmar about domestic violence and how one man support to change his attitudes and thus improve the lives of his wife and children
- **To School** (15’, dir: Soe Moe Aung) – a ‘true fictions’ film about a young boy whose obligations to his single-parent family dash his dreams of going to school and gaining education

YFS Open Day / 9 July 2016 at the YFS School Building in Yankin Township, Yangon
Around 250 students, alumni and guests from the media, arts and development sectors and civil society in Myanmar attended the evening reception held at the Mya Yeik Nyo Hotel in central Yangon. Introduced by José Costa da Mourao, Project Manager for the EU Delegation to Myanmar, the event was a chance for the School to promote its work and introduce its filmmakers to a wide audience.

YFS work screened during the evening included two of the films made on the 2016 Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners course, *The Animal Lover* (17’, dir: Aye Mya Hlaing) and *Through Thick and Thin* (16’, dir: Win Thu Myo) (see p. 42 above for details) alongside:

- **Dirty Water**
  - a participatory video made in collaboration with a Danu community during a Travelling Cinema placement in Aung Ban in Shan State. The School invited two female and one male participants from the PV workshop to Yangon to present their film about how pollution caused by a mining operation near the township is affecting their lives.

- **The School Uniform**
  - a ‘true fictions’ film which gives a touching account of the lengths to which an impoverished mother must go to be able to buy a school uniform for her young daughter, and hence enable the child to benefit from receiving an education.

This final film was followed by a screening of *About the ‘True Fictions’ Course*, one of the ten films made about the School’s courses in 2016. These short films help tutors and students reflect upon their work at the School and provide a ‘behind-the-scenes’ glimpse of how Yangon Film School films are made.
In a new initiative for 2016, YFS now holds ‘Happy Hour Screenings’ one evening per month. The screenings initially took place at the YFS House in Yankin Township but in January 2017 they were moved to the more central location of the Pansuriya Gallery in downtown Yangon.

The YFS Happy Hour screenings are designed to raise the profile of the School and its filmmakers and to help foster the growing sense of a community of filmmakers and cineastes in Yangon, both amongst Myanmar nationals and international residents and guests. The screenings are free of charge and YFS members and visitors alike are invited to watch one or two of films and discuss them over light refreshments. The screenings usually consist of one Myanmar and one international film. This provides YFS members and other Myanmar filmmakers with the opportunity to present their films and participate in a Q&A following the screening, as well as enabling film enthusiasts to see film classics and/or catch the latest developments in filmmaking from around the world.

Over 60 people came to the inaugural ‘Happy Hour Screening’ on 14 September 2016 to watch Behind The Screen, YFS-trained filmmaker Aung Nwai Htway’s prize-winning documentary about the marriage of his movie star parents and their life in Myanmar in the 1960s and 1970s, and I For India, British-Asian filmmaker Sandhya Suri’s film about her family’s emigration from India to the UK.
In the presence of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and an audience of 500 government representatives and members of local women’s organisations, three short YFS Docuanimation films: End Violence Against Women! (see p. 32 for details) were launched on 8 March 2017 in Nay Pyi Taw at the International Women’s Day ceremony held at Myanmar International Conference Centre I.

The School’s Director Lindsey Merrison attended the event together with Saw Eh Doh Poe, one of the nine YFS students responsible for creating the films. Also in attendance were two of YFS main partners in the project: May Sabe Phyu from the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in Myanmar and Mirco Kreibich, Director of the Heinrich Boell Foundation from Germany, (Sweden’s SIDA being the third). Saw Eh Doh Poe later participated in a panel discussion together with Aung Myo Min of Equality Myanmar, acting DG San San Aye of the Department of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (DSW) and Daw Khin Zar Naing of UNFPA. The films were well received by the audience, which included Information Minister U Pe Myint and DSW Minister Win Myat Aye, and were recognised as powerful statements to end all forms of violence against women. The docuanimations were subsequently approved for general release by the Ministry of Information and repeatedly broadcast on national TV and radio (reach: 30m). Radio versions are still being broadcast in different languages across the country. The films have been viewed almost 700,000 times and shared over 14,000 times on social media. They are also being distributed via a network of over 100 local civil society organisations, the YWCA, the Myanmar Red Cross and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on a compilation DVD entitled End Violence Against Women!

‘You have produced three really good films. They are truly heart-breaking. We need to make films like these in Myanmar so as to transfer valuable lessons.’
Dr Thida Tin, Director, Myanmar Motion Picture Development Department

‘This might be one of a few good works I’ve accomplished for all the bad deeds I’ve done in my life.’
Male YFS student Saw Eh Doh Poe on making his docuanimation on cyber violence against women

Launch of YFS Docuanimation Films in Naypyitaw
On International Women’s Day, 8 March 2017
Student Case Study: Thae Zar Chi Khaing

Thae Zar Chi Khaing (26) is one of the 2016 new intake into the School. She has had a tremendously busy year participating in a total of ten YFS training courses and generally taking advantage of all the opportunities the School has to offer her and the rest of the student body.

What made you join YFS?
I was a video journalist. I’m very interested in camera and editing but I had no formal training – I just learned ‘on the job’. Then, two years ago, I heard about YFS. I wanted to join because I heard that they taught camera and editing in a systematic way. I didn’t know anything about documentary beforehand. I’m very happy because YFS gave me a scholarship to study. Scholarships are essential for film courses in Myanmar because we cannot afford to pay high fees to study. It meant I could leave my job. I will always be grateful to YFS for giving me this chance.

What films have you worked on at YFS?
I was cinematographer on Tofu Nights (short documentary about making tofu the traditional way) and director on Dog Lady (short documentary about an old lady who feeds street dogs). I was also in one of the three teams on the DocuAnimation course (making 1-minute animated documentaries on gender-based violence) and I worked in a team on the sound design for The School Uniform (short ‘true fictions’ film) and Tofu Nights. In early 2017 I joined a YFS Travelling Cinema crew placement at Inle Lake in Shan State to facilitate a participatory video workshop to help a local community create two films about cultural identity and environmental pollution.

Which film role(s) are you focussing on?
Cinematography and editing. But I’m interested in all the roles in filmmaking. I love learning about all the different aspects of making a film.

What are your plans for the future?
I want to be a filmmaker and I’m working hard as a student to achieve my goal. I like to make documentaries, especially investigative ones because we have many issues to tackle in our country. But to achieve my dream, I also need to earn money. By exploring issues that we need to change through film we can raise awareness about weaknesses, messages and ideas. Film alone cannot change the country, but it can certainly contribute to change.

What are the challenges for filmmakers in Myanmar?
We need financial support and access to learning about filmmaking. There are only a very few institutions in the country which teach filmmaking. We also need to have more scholarships because most students cannot afford to learn in institutes where you have to pay fees.

What effect has the new government had on freedom of expression?
We have seen some changes but not everything is changing. The new government has opened up and welcomed the development of media and information but there has not been much change in freedom of expression because they restrict it with laws in other areas. There are many risks and challenges for filmmakers who want to address sensitive issues dealing with the country’s current political situation.

The lack of freedom of expression affects everyone in Myanmar. Our basic rights are being violated. As filmmakers, we believe we are playing a vital role to try and change society via film, but we are afraid to tell the truth or to get involved in political issues:

Khon Soe Moe Aung, director of My Leg and YFS Fellowship project In the Dark

‘By exploring the issues that we need to change and reform through film we can share knowledge and raise awareness about weaknesses, information, messages and ideas. Film alone cannot change the country, but it can certainly contribute to change.’

Thae Zar Chi Khaing, female member of 2016 intake at YFS
Yangon Film School Funding 2016

Total funding in 2016: 651,000 EUR

- European Union: 388,988 €
- VIKES - The Finnish Foundation for Media, Communication and Development /Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs: 126,414 €
- Goethe Institut: 50,000 €
- Open Society Foundation: 28,743 €
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (EDA): 3,255 €
- Heinrich Boell Foundation: 8,128 €
- Gender Equality Network (GEN): 9,820 €
- Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA): 25,139 €

Yangon Film School Expenditure 2016

Total expenditure in 2016: 651,000 EUR

- Direct Cost of Delivering Courses: 238,304 €
- Office and Training Venue Rentals: 61,730 €
- Equipment and Services: 28,683 €
- Post Production: 28,574 €
- Production Grants & Scholarships: 29,055 €
- Festivals, Visibility and Outreach, Travelling Cinema: 47,540 €
- Monitoring & Evaluation: 27,476 €
- Fundraising and Administration: 189,638 €
Between 2014 and 2016 the Yangon Film School enjoyed a period of unprecedented activity and success, providing over 121 weeks of training to 109 students from 14 different ethnicities. These 40-plus weeks of trainings per year were delivered in 38 separate courses taught by 29 international trainers and around 20 local trainers and covered almost every aspect of documentary and fictional filmmaking. During this period the School’s students produced over 50 documentaries and two short dramas. Filmed in eight Myanmar’s states and regions by multi-ethnic crews, these films explore such diverse topics as living with HIV (The Music Lover), the personal consequences of political activism (Mother and Son), A Political Life, the rural poor (Sugar & Spice, Slave, To School, The School Uniform), the rights of people living with disabilities (Lovely Bones) and threats to the environment (The Crocodile Creek). The project also saw the creation of ten feature-length and 13 short fictional screenplays and the development of 12 longer format documentaries tackling subjects such as illegal abortion, midwifery in rural Myanmar which is now being used to improve primary healthcare.

In 2014 the School joined forces with Search for Common Ground and Shalom Foundation to train 12 young people from Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon state, with participants travelling to all four states to film short documentaries on the topic of identity. One of the films made on the course, My Leg, about a prosthetics workshop in Kayah, has screened to acclaim and won prizes at film festivals across the globe. Indeed, over the past three years YFS films have won a total of 24 prizes and have screened at 126 international festivals in 30-plus countries. Another sign that the quality of the School’s work is garnering increasing recognition both in Myanmar and internationally is the prestigious Praemium Imperiale. This major accolade reflects the School’s significant achievement in training young Myanmar filmmakers and who recognises the value of what the School has seen and been engaged by a YFS film, who has worked with its filmmakers and who recognises the value of what the School is doing to help spread the word about this fundraising drive so that, as the School enters its second decade, YFS can continue to do what it was set up to do in 2005: train the next generation of young Myanmar in the artistic, technical, practical and ethical aspects of filmmaking and help give a voice to the country’s multi-ethnic population who were silenced during sixty long years of dictatorship.

The School will also continue to engage the Myanmar government in order to secure a permanent building and obtain certification for its courses, however, without a substantial grant of the kind provided by the European Union, the School is facing an existential threat. Fundraising has always been one of the organisation’s core activities but it has now become more pressing than ever. The School is about to embark upon a Fundraising Campaign to attempt to ease the funding shortfall it is currently experiencing.

We call upon all our funders and supporters, upon everyone who has seen and been engaged by a YFS film, who has worked with its filmmakers and who recognises the value of what the School is doing. Please help spread the word about this fundraising drive so that, as the School enters its second decade, YFS can continue to do what it was set up to do in 2005: train the next generation of young Myanmar in the artistic, technical, practical and ethical aspects of filmmaking and help give a voice to the country’s multi-ethnic population who were silenced during sixty long years of dictatorship.
The Yangon Film School would like to thank all of its partners in 2016 for their support.