Cover picture: YFS second year student La Pyae Ko (centre with camera) with soldiers of the Chin National Front during the filming of his documentary *The Go-Between* about female peacemaker Daw Chin Chin.

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The Year in Numbers / During 2017, the Yangon Film School...  
provided young Myanmar media students and professionals with  
48 training places  
and 112 training days  

31 students were trained  
of which 4 were new to YFS and  
27 were alumni  

Students came from 8 different ethnic groups  
including Bamar, Rakhine, Kayin, Lisu, Chin-Zomi, Shan-Paoh,  
Shan-Rakhine and Kayan  
and 3 different religions:  
Buddhist, Christian and Muslim  

16 female students attended courses / 52% of YFS students in  
2017 were women  

3 international tutors and 3 local tutors – a total of 6 tutors  
providing an average student-tutor ratio of 5:1  

8 documentaries made on the topic of  
‘Women & Peace’  

YFS films screened at 35 film festivals in 21 different countries  
including the UK, Myanmar, Germany, Malaysia, Nepal, Egypt,  
Japan and the USA and won 8 prizes
I Foreword from the Director

2017: YFS Responds to a Challenging Year

After the EU’s three-year grant to the School came to an end in May 2017, the rest of the year proved to be a challenging one for YFS. Staff cuts were sadly unavoidable, key personnel were obliged to work on a voluntary basis and only concerted fundraising efforts kept the School running and allowed it to continue to provide the quality trainings for which it is recognised – described by independent evaluator Aurélie Ferreira as ‘highly relevant, solid and comprehensive (...) providing unique diversity and outreach (...) and a respected portfolio [of films].’

The financial situation meant the School could not offer as many trainings as in previous years. Nonetheless, the 2017 courses were highly successful and continued to change the lives of its students – as attested by the Student Case Studies in this report – and make a valuable contribution to the media landscape in Myanmar. Of particular note is the School’s Women & Peace in Myanmar project. With funding from Finland, the UK and Switzerland, this programme, which commenced in July 2017, aims to promote the role of women in the peace process and raise awareness of violence against women in conflict-affected areas.

A block of training courses including advanced documentary editing, post-production coaching and sound design produced eight documentaries on the topic of ‘Women & Peace’. Filmed in several locations, from Kachin State in the north to a Kayin community in the south-east, the films allowed students to go behind the headlines to tell intimate, often tragic but sometimes surprisingly entertaining stories from conflict-affected communities. They include Mother At Arms, the extraordinary story of a female freedom fighter with a severely disabled daughter; The Good Woman of South Dagon’s indomitable old lady’s ‘tough love’ approach to her NLD work in Yangon; and Seeds of Sadness, about the traumatic effect of landmines on a family in Bago.

The School also continued its ground-breaking Travelling Cinema Project with a participatory video facilitation in Kyaukpadaung as well as follow-up trips to Chin, Rakhine and Shan states. The videos made in this project are receiving wide distribution notably also to decision-makers and are helping communities to create their own tools to tackle issues – including pollution, waste management, lack of job opportunities and loss of traditions – in effective and proactive ways.

YFS films continue to be screened at festivals at home and abroad and are also beginning to be broadcast on domestic television. Not only are YFS trainings and films strengthening the School’s filmmakers, helping them to become innovative cultural actors and agents of change; they are also giving a voice to some of the country’s marginalised communities, thereby contributing to the promotion of social cohesion in a divided land.

Lindsey Merrison
Yangon Film School Director, June 2018
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 2017 the YFS Management Team comprised:

Berlin office

- Lindsey Merrison
  - Director

- Tina Walinda
  - Project & Fund Manager/Communications & PR

- Johanna Huth
  - Festival Coordinator

- Arlette Heyn
  - Accountant

Yangon office

- Aleksandra Minkiewicz
  - Country Director

- Win Naing Khir
  - Project Coordinator

- Naw Hse Htoo Paw
  - Logistics

- Salai Samuel
  - Equipment Manager

- Naw Sar Eh Paw
  - Accountant

- Aye Ni Mar
  - Accountant

- Ta Ra
  - Production Coordinator

Yangon Film Services

The YFS Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the School’s governing body. It undertakes constant and consistent oversight and is the main decision-making authority. It is elected by the student body represented by the Student Sub-Committee and Lindsey Merrison who, as Director of the Berlin-based Yangon Film School e.V., serves as Chairperson and has power of veto.

The YFS Yangon Steering Committee develops the INGO’s strategy and coordinates with the Director who ensures its implementation. The Committee also ensures that all provisions of law and the INGO internal policies are abided by and works to achieve their compliance. In 2017 the YFS Yangon Steering Committee members were:

- Lindsey Merrison
  - Chairperson & Founding Director of YFS

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

- Franz Xaver Augustin
  - International Arts & Culture Representative

- Cho Cho Hnin
  - (Shin Daewe)
  - Student/Alumni Representative

- Shunn Lei Swe Yee
  - Student/Alumni Representative

- Wai Mar Nyunt
  - Student/Alumni Representative

- Aleksandra Minkiewicz
  - Local Management Representative

- Win Naing Khir
  - Local Management Representative
The YFS Student Sub-Committee

The YFS Yangon Steering Committee is supported by a five-member Student Sub-Committee which is elected on an annual basis by the entire student body and the YFS Director. In 2017 the Student Sub-Committee members were:

- **Sai Nyi Nyi** (joined YFS in 2011)
- **Thet Su Hlaing** (joined YFS in 2011)
- **May Htoo Cho** (joined YFS in 2007)
- **Nwaye Zar Che Soe** (joined YFS in 2014)
- **Sai Naw Kham** (joined YFS in 2014)

YANGON FILM FOUNDATION

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

- **Kyi Pyu Shin**
  Film Director
- **Diramore**
  (Maung Maung Zaw Htet)
  Musician & Film Composer
- **Khin Myanmar**
  YFS editor / trainer
- **Thet Su Hlaing**
  YFS student since 2011
- **Soe Arkar Htun**
  YFS student since 2014
Yangon Film School draws upon a growing pool of international and Myanmar filmmakers to tutor its courses. The 2017 courses were tutored by (in alphabetical order):

**Kirsten Kunhardt / Sound Design**
German sound designer of over 60 films and TV programmes including popular German crime series *Tatort*

**Kyaw Ko Ko / Sound Design**
YFS-trained filmmaker, one of the first graduates of the *Train to Teach* programme who has now joined the School’s roster of tutors

**Leo Liesvirta / Advanced Editing & Post-Production Mentor**
Finnish editor and visual effects artist who has worked on a number of award-winning short films

**Rachel Mathews / Screenwriting Mentor**
UK director of award-winning shorts; writes feature films as well as radio plays for BBC Radio 4 and is currently developing TV series projects

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

**Slyne Mon / Sound Design**
Musician and YFS-trained sound recordist/designer who, following the *Train to Teach* programme, has joined the YFS School’s roster of tutors

**Melanie Sandford / Editing Mentor**
Award-winning Australian editor of both fiction and non-fiction who has edited many high-profile TV series in Australia
What are your plans for the future?
Filmmaking is my favourite thing. I want to try and be like Naing Thaung Hla and not give up. Even if I don’t become a professional, I will always be in this field. But I will also have to do other work to make a living. It’s tricky.

And what about the future of Myanmar – are you feeling positive or negative?
I see two big problems at the moment: one is that ethnic groups want their own rights, which means legislation; the other is the fight for democracy, for everyone to get human rights and bring an end to dictatorship. Regarding ethnic populations, many people say you shouldn’t highlight ethnicity and religion because everyone is a human being. But I think we have to protect the ethnic groups in Myanmar otherwise they will just disappear and their culture and literature will be destroyed. That’s why Myanmar has to build a country that is a truly democratic federation. If we manage to achieve that, everyone will benefit from having peaceful and secure lives. We won’t be able to get off the poorest countries list if we don’t have peace or stable politics, if the rules keep changing with each new administration and we don’t have proper education, social or economic systems.

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Student Case Study – Min Yan Htaik
Min Yan Htaik (29) was born in Phaya Thone Su (Three Pagoda Village) in Kayin State near the Thai-Myanmar border but grew up in Mudon in Mon State. His parents farm rubber, coffee, betel nut, limes and durian. Before joining YFS in 2014 as one of the students selected for the School’s cooperation with Search for Common Ground INGO, Min Yan Htaik worked in IT as a web developer, technician and trainer. A committed activist, he has undertaken voluntary work for the Mon National Education Committee, the New Mon State Party, the Rah Mon Nya Peace Foundation, the Mon Women’s Organization and the Mon-Region Social Development Network.

What made you apply to YFS?
I am very interested in documentaries. Working as a volunteer, I’ve come across so many issues. I want to make documentaries so that I can show the authorities the difficulties people are facing.

What films have you made at YFS and what were your roles?
I worked as cinematographer on The Road is Rough and Muddy (one of the Search for Common Ground films shot in the no man’s land between armed fighters and government forces in Kayin).

Which film (or other activity) are you most proud of doing at YFS and why?
I am very proud that I have learned how to facilitate participatory video courses because it supports my ambition to empower people to make films. I’ve been a PV facilitator three times now, once on the 2016 YFS Travelling Cinema trip to Myitkyina in Kachin State and then on programmes organised by Dawei Watch and the Human Rights Foundation of Mon Land at the Mon Area Community Development Organisation in Yay Township.

You are currently making a YFS Fellowship film called Rafters. Can you tell us about this project?
The film is about Naing Thaung Hla, a rafter in a conflict area, and his life experiences. It will show that his life is winding like the creek I show in the film. Naing Thaung Hla is very determined and refuses to give up. Seeing him face his struggles while rafting inspired me to make a documentary about him.

Have you encountered any challenges in making the film so far?
The journey to the filming location was very rough and the film crew were exhausted. There was no electricity because the location is in the mountains, forest and creek. It rained a lot during the shoot which made it difficult to use the equipment. We had to break off filming because the camera lens fogged. It was also difficult filming the creek. We couldn’t carry enough food for five filming days so we had to hunt and fish to feed ourselves during the shoot.
What are your plans for the future?
Filmmaking is my favourite thing. I want to try and be like Naing Thaung Hla and not give up. Even if I don’t become a professional, I will always be in this field. But I will also have to do other work to make a living. It’s tricky.

And what about the future of Myanmar – are you feeling positive or negative?
I see two big problems at the moment: one is that ethnic groups want their own rights, which means legislation; the other is the fight for democracy, for everyone to get human rights and bring an end to dictatorship. Regarding ethnic populations, many people say you shouldn’t highlight ethnicity and religion because everyone is a human being. But I think we have to protect the ethnic groups in Myanmar otherwise they will just disappear and their culture and literature will be destroyed. That’s why Myanmar has to build a country that is a truly democratic federation. If we manage to achieve that, everyone will benefit from having peaceful and secure lives. We won’t be able to get off the poorest countries list if we don’t have peace or stable politics, if the rules keep changing with each new administration and we don’t have proper education, social or economic systems.
Annual surveys of YFS alumni reveal the high impact of its trainings with an astonishing 87% percent of alumni working in film, media and media-related development fields (the equivalent figure for UK media graduates is estimated at around 30 percent: [https://stephenfollows.com/how-many-film-students-are-there-in-the-uk/].

Because the majority of YFS alumni are freelance, it is difficult to quantify precisely which area of the media they are working in – on one job they may be cinematographer, the next sound recordist, the next editor or director, etc. The following figures are taken from a survey undertaken in early 2018 of 135 YFS alumni when the School asked them what they spent most of their time doing in 2017.
Objectives: to deepen the 2016 intake’s understanding of the country’s bid for peace and also their expertise in the technical, ethical, political, social and artistic challenges of documentary film editing as part of the School’s ‘Women & Peace in Myanmar’ project.

Description: The YFS ‘Women & Peace in Myanmar’ project is a programme running from August 2017 to May 2018 to train a cohort of the School’s filmmakers in documentary editing and post-production, docuanimation and, as part of the Travelling Cinema project, participatory video facilitation. Open to both male and female students who apply for places on the individual training courses, its overall aim is to promote the role of women in Myanmar’s peace process and to raise awareness of violence against women in the country’s conflict-affected areas. In 2017 this programme saw the creation of eight documentary films of 15-20 minutes in length on the overall theme of ‘Women & Peace’. The Advanced Documentary Editing Course was designed to help students bring these films to completion. In early 2017 a call went out via the School’s networks inviting second year students to submit applications for a documentary idea on the ‘Women & Peace’ theme. Of the 10 projects submitted, eight proposals were selected by the YFS Director and international Editing Mentor Tuula Mehtonen. These filmmakers were then granted funding to research and film their documentary.

The eight filmmakers – six women and two men – were allotted a period of two months to film their projects. Most of the filmmakers worked with crews of two or three people, though some directors travelling to conflict areas filmed their documentaries alone in order to be less obtrusive. Filming took place across Myanmar: two films were shot in Kachin State in the far north, and two in Kayin in Myanmar’s south east; other films were made in Chin State, in rural Bagan in central Myanmar, in Bago and in Yangon’s South Dagon district.

In July 2017 the eight filmmakers came together with seven second-year editors (one director chose to edit her film herself) and the tutors to edit their films. The Advanced Documentary Editing course covered the complete process of editing a documentary as well as giving the student directors and editors important lessons in how to collaborate on a film edit and introducing everyone to the School’s updated editing system and subtitle workflow.
The course began with the student directors describing their films and identifying for the editors and tutors the strengths in their footage as well as where they anticipated problems. The lead tutor then gave a lecture about how to start the editing process and work began on transcribing the conversations in the films (necessary for both the editing process and the subtitles). This work was made additionally challenging due to the fact that some of the footage was in Chin, Lisu and Kayin, languages the editors did not necessarily speak or understand. Subtitling is always a big factor in YFS films. Here it became an imperative from the start of the process as the students grappled with a new subtitling system which was unfortunately not as straightforward as had been hoped. An additional challenge was the sheer amount of footage the student filmmakers had shot: 8-18 hours per project, which is two or even three times more than a professional filmmaker would shoot for a documentary of 20 minutes in length.

The editors moved from a paper cut of their films to the first assembly, or ‘0-version’. The directors were given an extra creative framing assignment to explore the atmosphere and style for the content of their films. During the training period, Monday morning meetings ensured everyone was kept up to date on how the various edits were progressing. Group screenings held at each major milestone – from assembly to rough cut to fine cut – ensured everyone received plenty of structured feedback from the tutors and their peers.

**Outcomes:** the course resulted in the offline edits of the eight documentaries i.e. the locked picture cuts without sound design, colour grading or polished subtitles and credits. Descriptions of the individual films can be found on p.37. In addition, the students:

- consolidated their understanding of and competence in documentary film editing
- learned the theory and practice of documentary film structure and dramaturgy
- developed the art of collaboration between the film director and editor
- practiced giving and receiving constructive feedback on works in progress
- learned how to operate the School’s new non-linear editing system
- received training in a new subtitle workflow and mastered key techniques in film subtitling
- delivered films on a particular theme, in this case ‘Women & Peace’

This was the **third time** I’ve taught this course and I was surprised by how much the editors have developed. They are much more independent now.

*Tuula Mehtonen, Lead Tutor, Advanced Editing Course*
Aye Nilar Kyaw (23), or AJ for short, is of Kayin ethnicity but was born and grew up in Yangon where her parents work with a Christian church. Before joining YFS in 2016 she was an admin officer and gospel singer in Yangon.

What made you apply to YFS?
I saw Behind the Screen (a documentary by YFS-trained filmmaker Aung Nwai Htway about his screen actor parents in 1960/70s Myanmar). It made me interested in making documentaries and I decided I wanted to make documentaries myself.

What films have you worked on at YFS?
I worked as a cinematographer on Through Thick and Thin (first year documentary from 2016) and I directed Child of the Revolution (one of the 2017 Women & Peace films, see description on p.37) which won the Jade Award in the 2017 Yangon Film School-Goethe Institut Myanmar Documentary Awards.

Which film role(s) are you focusing on? Cinematography, sound design and, sometimes, director.

Which film (or other activity) are you most proud of doing at YFS and why?
Making Child of the Revolution because I had to work as director, cinematographer and sound designer on that film.

You have worked as a student trainer recently. Do you enjoy it? Are there any challenges?
Yes, I do enjoy it. The main challenge is that this is my first time working as a student trainer and sometimes the students don’t fully respect me because I am the same age as them!

What are the differences between being a student and being a trainer?
Being a student, all you have to do is learn. But when you are a trainer, you need to teach and find ways to share your experiences. You have to learn a lot about the subject in order to teach it.

You are going to Sydney, Australia in July 2018. How did this come about?
I am still waiting for the confirmation but I’m hoping to attend the 2018 International Youth Media Summit 2018 organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The summit is called ‘Learning to Walk in Their Shoes’ and is about the global migrant crisis.

What are your plans for the future?
I will try my best to become a great cinematographer and sound designer. Those are my dream jobs – cinematography and sound design.
Objectives: to mentor YFS second-year editing students as they worked to complete the eight documentaries made in the ‘Women & Peace in Myanmar’ project to an international standard.

Description: beginning with the picture-locked edits of the ‘Women & Peace’ documentaries, the students were given a month to complete the post-production of these films. The emphasis was on encouraging the students to work independently, with the international mentor on hand to help when they encountered problems they were unable to solve. The students focussed on four key areas of post-production:

1. **Colour Correction and Colour Grading** to ensure the films were completed to exhibition quality for film festivals and television screenings

2. **Subtitling** including ‘double subtitles’ in both Myanmar and English for dialogue spoken in Lisu, Chin or Kayin so the films can be understood by the Bamar majority in Myanmar as well as by international audiences

3. **Title Design** including a discussion of the overall ‘look’ of the film and the importance of selecting titles and captions which complement this look

4. **Credits** whether delivered on a role, on individual cards or a combination of both. Again, credits were created in Myanmar and English to ensure the films are comprehensible to both domestic and international audiences

Outcomes: the visual components of all eight ‘Women & Peace’ films were completed and 12 second year students were trained in the post-production of documentary films to an international standard.

They are very important, these films. They will affect people and they will maybe make sure that the peace process comes faster and this will actually save lives. I feel privileged to be part of it, and the students should be proud of themselves as well!

*Leo Liesvirta, Editing Tutor, Advanced Editing Course*
Women & Peace Films: Sound Design

/ 2 – 28 October 2017 at the YFS House, Yangon

We are making better films in Myanmar. This is thanks to YFS, the only school where you can learn all the filmmaking processes in one place.

Slyne Mon, Sound Design Trainer, joined YFS in 2012

Tutor: Kirsten Kunhardt (Germany)
Local Sound Trainers: Kyaw Ko Ko
Slyne Mon

Participants: seven men and three women
from seven different ethnic backgrounds,
including four new intakes to the YFS student body

Objectives: to give this mix of new and returning sound students the ability to independently complete documentary film sound editing, including:

- assessing the quality of the original sound
- knowledge of the methods and technical possibilities to improve this original sound using acoustic methods
- understanding that sound design has a big impact on the overall effect of a film
- learning the use and impact of atmospheres, sounds and effects

Description: the tutor and YFS sound trainers first presented the theory and techniques of sound design to the students. The students were then given the opportunity to apply this knowledge in a series of short practical exercises before moving on to work on the sound design of the eight ‘Women & Peace’ films. In a ‘learning on the job’ process, the students improved their skills via constant practice and feedback during the month-long course. Key areas of learning included:

- which sound plug-ins can be used for which acoustic problems
- how a scene can be made tonal
- which foleys (additional sounds created in the studio) need to be added and how to create and add them
- the use of music in a documentary film

Outcomes: the sound of the eight documentary films from the YFS ‘Women & Peace in Myanmar’ project was mixed and the films were set to music by the students. The sound design contributed to the audience’s understanding of the locations and content of the films. The individual components (speech/atmosphere/sound effects/music) were combined in the final sound mixes to form a harmonious whole.
Student-Trainer Case Study: Slyne Mon

Slyne Mon (38) was born in Sagaing Region but grew up largely in Chin State to Chin parents. His father was a vet, his mother a school teacher and accountant before she discovered her current and favourite occupation: making products out of recycled plastic. Slyne is a talented musician who plays a number of different instruments. He was working at Sky Net Television as a composer and audio-engineer before he joined YFS in 2012 to study sound design. Since then he has participated in the YFS Train to Teach programme and is now on the School’s roster of sound trainers, passing on the skills he has learned to the next generation of students.

What made you apply to YFS?
I've always been interested in learning about filmmaking. I heard about YFS via a friend who was living in Berlin at the time and who said the School was running a sound course with European tutors. So I applied and got on the course trained by (YFS sound tutor) Ivan Horák.

Which film (or other activity) are you most proud of doing at YFS and why?
I am very satisfied with my recent involvement in YFS student films where I've had the opportunity to do the final sound mixes. As a student-trainer I helped to mix several films during the last Sound Design course including Mother’s Burden, Mother at Arms and Seeds of Sadness (see film descriptions on p.38). I'm also happy with my involvement in the 2016 Competition Films including My Mandalay and (the multi-award-winning short documentary) Sugar and Spice.

You have been working quite a lot recently as a sound trainer. Do you enjoy this work? Yes, I do.

What are the challenges to being a trainer?
I'm worried I'm never quite prepared enough for the courses. This makes me rather anxious. But we, the team, always manage to find solutions together. I am grateful to my partners and the lead tutors.

You recently worked on a project called Dimensions. Can you tell us more about this?
Dimensions is a feature film by young Burmese filmmaker Nyan Htin. I think it can be called an Action/Drama. It was produced by Bonanza Film Production in collaboration with Shutter Production. I worked as the dialogue editor, foley artist and re-recording mixer. It took over a year to finish the sound design on the film.

Do you think sound recording and post-production sound is changing in Myanmar?
Yes, I think it is and we are heading towards making better films in general. This is thanks to YFS, the only school where you can learn all the filmmaking processes in one place, as well as to film festivals like Wathann, Human Rights Human Dignity, Memory! Film Festival, etc. Young filmmakers are now able to make films the way they want them to be. But the Myanmar film industry still has a long way to go. I’m glad to be part of the changes.
Can you tell us a little bit about your work with the YFS Travelling Cinema project?
I have facilitated in two Travelling Cinema trips for YFS. One to Wainmaw in Kachin state in 2014 and the other to Hakha in Chin state in 2015. I’m often surprised by how well the local participants can present their video stories after such a short period of training, especially when the participants interview their fellow villagers. The interviewees are usually very willing to talk about the issues they are facing which makes their videos very effective, not to mention that they are the most excited and engaged of audiences when the films are screened at the end of the process. The best thing for me is to be able to stay connected with the participants and to hear from them how their situations are developing.

What is valuable about the Travelling Cinema project?
Showing documentaries to communities experiencing similar situations to those in the films has a very positive effect on the audiences. It makes them feel that they are not alone with the issues they are facing, that they can learn how to overcome their difficulties. It can even help them to see how lucky they are compared to other people in other situations.

What are your plans for the future?
I enjoy playing music and working with filmmakers so I will definitely continue doing that. I’ve started a collective of sound designers and of experimental music/sound-art artists. I hope to be able to juggle everything so I can combine these with new projects in the future.

And what about the future of Myanmar – are you currently feeling positive or negative?
Politically speaking, Myanmar has a very long way to go to reach a true development. In the art scene, on the other hand, I can see many young people trying to reshape the scene either through their filmmaking or in music and other media. And I’m really proud to be one of them.
Travelling Cinema Trip and PV Facilitation in Kyaukpadaung
/ 21 December 2017 – 2 January 2018 in Kyaukpadaung near Mandalay

YFS Facilitators: Su Su Hlaing, Aye Mya Hlaing, Zaw Lar, Sai Nyi Nyi (2 female and 2 male)
Local contact Myo Min Tun.

Participants: 12 young adults from Kyaukpadaung, a mix of male and female, all unemployed and selected by the local contact to participate in the training in order to give them more skills and employment opportunities.

Objectives: to train the participants in how to use simple camera, sound and editing equipment to make two participatory videos (PVs) on issues affecting them and their community. The PVs are designed as advocacy tools to transmit knowledge about issues to decision and policy makers and also to encourage the local community to find effective solutions for themselves.

Training Description: Kyaukpadaung is a town of around 250,000 inhabitants in central Myanmar near Mandalay. Close to the major Buddhist and Nat pilgrimage site of Mount Popa, it is a strongly religious town with an almost 100% Buddhist population. This created some problems for the training with the parents of female participants being anxious about their daughters’ safety with the ‘strangers’ from Yangon. An issue arose when the trainers closed the training room door to screen films in darkness. This was regarded with suspicion, however, the local contact, Myo Min Tun, was able to allay the fears of anxious parents and other townsfolk. At the start of the training, the female participants were very shy, almost silent. However, all YFS facilitators must take at least one PV training course before they go out into the field. These courses give them tools for overcoming issues of trust and shyness. A combination of games, group discussions and screenings of previous PV films meant that, by Day 3 of the training, the group had gelled well and the female participants were contributing as confidently as the men.

While they were receiving training in the concept of PV and how to use equipment chosen specifically for its ease of operation and accessibility (including some filming undertaken on mobile phones), the trainees were asked to identify the issues facing their community that could be addressed by a PV. Issues included: corruption amongst government officials and ‘cronies’; the loss of local businesses and employment opportunities; a forest fire on Mount Popa; spirit worship of the Nats, and the lack of opportunities and activities for the town’s young people. Since time was limited, the group ultimately chose two smaller topics which they felt confident they could address during the training:

i) the cleaning and restoration of an old lake near the town that has been polluted and fallen into disrepair
ii) the education provided by the local monastery to around 500 orphans

After being trained in how to conceive, plan, structure and storyboard a PV, the trainees split into two groups and spent two days filming the footage for their videos. This was followed by three days of editing the footage into a completed film. The trainees were mentored by the YFS Travelling Cinema crew working as trained facilitators throughout the process. The filming and editing culminated in the completion of the two PVs. Supported by the YFS facilitators, the participants then organised a screening of the two PVs to an audience of the local community and regional officials. Around 150 people attended the screening which was followed by a lively debate about the issues raised in the films.
Outcomes: the most tangible outcome was the creation of two PV films:

i) *Our Lake* – in which a local MP as well as members of the community are interviewed about the lake, what has gone wrong with it and how the situation can be rectified.

ii) *Happy Rules* – a PV depicting how the abbot and monks offer education to 500 orphans at the town’s Shwe Nadi monastery

Other outcomes included:

• training 12 local participants in PV filmmaking, giving them skills that can increase their own chances of employability and can also be transferred to other members of the community
• screening and discussing a number of PV films on various issues facing local communities across Myanmar, informing both the workshop participants and the wider community in Kyauk padaung about recurrent issues in their country and showing them how other communities are tackling and solving similar issues to the ones they are facing
• sensitising four YFS Travelling Cinema crew members from Yangon about issues facing rural communities such as those in Kyauk padaung
• identifying possible participants for future YFS filmmaking courses in Yangon

Action Plan: 100 DVDs of each film have been made and are being distributed throughout the town by the participants and a local partner who is also screening the films in his gallery and at the workshops he organises to train local young people. The MP featured in *Our Lake* is working on raising a budget to repair the lake. He and local volunteers involved in the lake’s restoration are using the film as a fundraising tool. They intend to make another PV showing the lake once it has been cleaned up.

The *Happy Rules* PV was re-screened in January 2018 at the opening ceremony of a new building at Shwe Nadi monastery and went down very well with the audience of local dignitaries, artists and townsfolk. The film will be screened at future donation ceremonies to raise money for the monastery school and also as a tool to train the monks in how to educate the children.

‘I am very proud that I have learned how to facilitate participatory video courses because it supports my ambition to empower people to make films.’

*Min Yan Htaik, joined YFS in 2014*
Student Case Study: Su Su Hlaing

Su Su Hlaing (29) was born and grew up in Yangon to a single mother who looked after the house and her children and worked as a seamstress. Before joining YFS in 2013, Su Su Hlaing was a print media and radio journalist for seven years, work she continues doing now alongside her many writing and filmmaking projects.

What made you apply to YFS?
I saw information about the YFS scriptwriting competition in a journal and submitted my initial idea and synopsis. I won the first prize and was chosen to join the YFS scriptwriting course.

Which film (or other activity) are you most proud of doing at YFS and why?
I am proud of every single piece of work I do at YFS because I can apply my ability and everything that I am learning from the YFS mentors and projects. Whenever I say I am YFS student or I see YFS and my name together in a list of credits, that is a special moment for me. YFS means more to me than just a school or training centre.

In 2017 you made Tomorrow or When? about a man in Kachin State who tends his house and garden in a war zone.
It is a documentary about U Yaw Htung, one of the refugees who fled their homes because of the civil war between the Kachin and Myanmar military. No one dared return home because the area had become a battlefield. But U Yaw Htung went back to his village to get his cows in order to pay for his sons’ school fees. That meant passing through an area that had been land-mined. I was fascinated by him because it was very dangerous but he had a meaningful reason to go back home.

Why did you want to make the film?
When I was a young journalist, I had a very close friend. He is Kachin and I am Myanmar. We were like brother and sister but we fell out over the civil war and ethnic affairs. In 2011, the war became more serious again in Kachin State. My friend joined the ethnic armed forces and we lost touch. But when I went to Kachin State in 2015, I met him again and, through him, many refugees and Kachin people who were friendly towards me. I wanted to make a film about the relationship between two ethnic groups. I chose my protagonist because he is not as extreme as my friend: like me, U Yaw Htung believes in peace and reconciliation. During the filming I had to go through armed areas with him and we met soldiers from both sides. The Myanmar army blocked our way and the ethnic army didn’t trust me. I was afraid and I almost gave up on the film. But U Yaw Htung kept me safe and his strong sense of hope made me carry on.

Did you receive funding to make the film?
I applied to DMZ Docs (DMZ International Documentary Film Festival in South Korea) for funding. My English and presenting skills were not good enough to win the prize but I prepared very well and I was so keen to make this film that DMZ agreed to fund me. The difficulty of the topic and the remoteness of the location meant I needed to spend much more money than the grant I received. So I worked as a fixer and raised money that way. I bought an iPhone and computer for editing. I couldn’t hire a DOP, sound person or other crew partly because of the cost but also because it was very dangerous and I didn’t want to put other people at risk for my film. So I went up to Kachin alone and did everything by myself. Then one of my friends helped me with the editing. The film was screened at DMZ 2017.
With all that, do you have time to work on any other projects?
I am preparing a new film about me and my mother. I also need to finish my documentary about illegal abortion (YFS Fellowship documentary *The Missing Needles*).

What else have you been doing recently?
I work as a fixer and producer for foreign media companies in Myanmar. I have also been writing scripts for TV series (including *The Sun, The Moon & The Truth*, see p. 43) and commercials. I share my filmmaking, storytelling and writing skills by holding workshops and short trainings. Sometimes I am a voice artist for advertisements, TV programmes and films. And of course I am also still training with YFS: I recently took the Participatory Video course and went on the Travelling Cinema trip to Kyaukpadaung (see p. 22).

What are your plans for the future?
I would like to study filmmaking abroad. And I would like to be able run a business so that I can make the films I want to make without having to worry about the money.

And what about the future of Myanmar – are you currently feeling positive or negative?
It depends on everyone, not just the government but also the citizens. I think it will take many years for things to change. I believe in myself more than the government. If, as each individual, we do our duty and try our best without blaming or putting too much hope in other people, then things will become more positive, at least on an individual level.
An essential component of the School’s Travelling Cinema project is the follow-up trips where YFS student trainers return to the communities where they facilitated participatory video (PV) workshops. The follow-up trips enable YFS trainers to reconnect with the workshop participants, check on the progress of the projects that the PVs initiated/supported and ensure that the films made during the trainings receive as wide a distribution as possible to reach affected the communities themselves as well as key actors/decision-makers on a regional and national level.

In 2017, YFS student trainers made three follow-up trips as follows:

1. Follow-Up Trip to Man Khin in Kachin State, April 2017

During the initial PV facilitation in December 2016, four YFS student trainers travelled to Kachin State in the far north-east of Myanmar (almost 1,700 kms from Yangon) to train 14 members of partner organisation the Lisu Civil Society Network. The training resulted in two PVs about the Lisu minority culture in Kachin: Our Culture and Forever Myitsone. In April 2017, two members of the initial team, Zaw Lar and Aye Mya Hlaing, returned to Kachin to reconnect with the participants and help distribute the films. Their trip achieved the following:

- **Myitkyina News Journal** – a meeting with the chief editor resulted in both films being posted on the journal’s Facebook pages
- **Kachin National Museum** – the films were donated to the museum where they will be preserved and accessed by the general public
- **Myitsone** – the trainers distributed DVDs of the film throughout this community which, until recently, was threatened with obliteration by the huge Myitsone dam and hydro-electric power project. The government only suspended the project after a public outcry
- **Lisu Literature & Culture Organisation** agreed to distribute the films and screen them at their upcoming 100th anniversary celebrations
- **The Lisu Civil Society Network** partner organisation with over 200 Lisu youth members is distributing the films via its website. A member of the Network also screened the two PVs at the 2nd Share Arena training event in Mon State in 2017 to an audience of over 300 people and explained the process and outcomes of PV training
- **Lisu Youth Camp 2017** – YFS student trainer Zaw Lar attended the camp and screened the two PVs to over 200 Lisu youths

‘Showing documentaries to communities experiencing similar situations to those in the films has a very positive effect on the audiences. It makes them feel that they are not alone.’

* Slyne Mon, YFS Travelling Cinema crew member
Travelling Cinema Follow-Up Trips

2. Follow-Up Trip to Kyauk Phyu in Rakhine State, April 2017

In 2015 YFS student trainers delivered an initial PV training at Leik-Khamaw Village on Yanbye Island near Kyauk Phyu, a town of around 45,000 people in Rakhine State. In April 2017 two of the trainers, Arrow Luck and Khin Warso, undertook a follow-up trip to distribute DVDs of *Live & Hope*, the PV made during the training about the difficulties local people are encountering in finding work. Follow-up activities included:

- **Three Community Screenings** – to around 70 people in total, including NGO workers, volunteers from the village, a group of female activists as well as representatives from CSOs and micro-businesses set up to combat the unemployment problem
- **Post-Screening Discussions** – about youth education, job opportunities and business plans compatible with the village and surrounding area. People were particularly focussed on working to change the law to better protect local businesses and avoid exploitation of workers (e.g. in garment factories being set up around Kyauk Phyu) and land-grabbing by outside companies coming into the region
- **Awareness Raising Activities** – using the film as an advocacy tool with partner organisation Kyauk Phyu Rural Development Association who uploaded it on its Facebook pages and distributed DVD copies to its network. Rakhine-based CSOs including the Ann Pipeline Integrity Services Group and the Ethnic People Development Partnership (EPDP) are distributing DVD copies with the aim of encouraging farmers whose land is being grabbed to speak out and take action to protect their livelihoods
- **Media Outreach Work** – including sending the film to the Democratic Voice of Burma and Mizzima Media.

3. Follow-Up Trip to Inle Lake in Shan State, November 2017

In March 2017, four YFS student trainers facilitated a PV workshop in Yay-Oo Village near Nyaung Shwe beside the popular tourist destination of Inle Lake. The training resulted in the 12 participants from partner organisation Hnalonehla Innmaungmae making two PVs: *The Clean Team*, about local attempts to clean up the lake pollution by tourism and businesses; and *Traditional Rowing at Inle Lake* about the dying art of leg-rowing. In November 2017 two trainers, Khon Soe Moe Aung and Nang Chan Myayt Aye, returned to Shan State. Activities included:

- **Meeting the Participants** – to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the initial training, the PVs made and to discuss how to distribute the films and use them as advocacy tools in the local community and media. Four of the participants accompanied the YFS facilitators during the trip
- **Maing Tauk Charity** – set up by the headmaster of a local school, the charity agreed to distribute the films and screen them in local schools
- **Inle Lake Environmental Conservation Centre** – took copies of the films to screen in their network and distribute to the local community
- **Film Screenings** – the two PVs were screened to audiences of local people, CSOs, World Bank representatives and the local media in Nyaung Shwe and media from the Shan State capital of Taunggyi. The audiences at the screenings were very engaged and intend to use the films as advocacy tools in the State Government and to help apply for regional development. Further screenings were held at Nyaung Shwe Human Rights Film Festival in November and at Intha National Day.
Summary of 2017 Training Statistics

2017 YFS STUDENTS BY ETHNICITY

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<tr>
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<td>Chin-Zomi</td>
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Due to the continuing funding shortfall at the School, YFS has unfortunately had to put on hold its plans to provide further editions of its Art of Screenwriting and ‘True Fictions’ filmmaking courses. However, in 2018 the School will continue its ‘Women & Peace in Myanmar’ programme with a second edition of the very successful DocuAnimation course, this time focussing on violence against women and girls in conflict areas and the equally important topic of ‘Youth & Peace’. With this in mind, the School is delighted to be able to run another edition of its flagship course The Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners and its attendant modules in camera, sound and editing, thus accepting another intake of first year students into the School.

1 18 December 2017 – 19 February 2018 / DocuAnimation
Eight-weeks, residential
A training covering crucial aspects of research, identifying protagonists and sensitive interviewing as well as innovative and emotive animation techniques, resulting in animated documentaries that effectively communicate key messages about issues facing women in ethnic and conflict affected areas of Myanmar.

2 14 February – 7 April 2018 / The Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners
Seven-and-a-half-weeks, residential
Intensive course for six male and six female participants. Includes Basic Training followed by an introduction to the documentary genre via screenings, classroom sessions and practical exercises in cinematography, sound recording, interview technique, research and treatment writing, culminating in the production of four films. Co-taught by international and Myanmar tutors and student trainers.

3 17 – 29 March / Cinematography and Sound Training Module: ‘All in a Day’s Work’
Eleven days
An intensive camera-and-sound training module for students of the Beginners’ course, co-tutored by local trainers and one international tutor, including a 3-day ‘taster’ introduction to editing.

4 21 - 31 May 2018 / Participatory Video Training for Travelling Cinema Crews
Ten-days-non, residential
Taught by an international tutor specialised in participatory video methods this course, which includes a two-day PV facilitation in Yangon, aims to prepare the School’s Travelling Cinema crews for outreach assignments all over Myanmar.

5 2 – 30 June 2018 / Introduction to Editing
Four-weeks, residential
Co-taught by local student trainers and an international tutor and aimed at 12 participants from the Beginners’ Course who have little or no editing experience. Participants will receive an introduction to digital editing suites and practice editing a range of short exercises from previously filmed material.
6 3–22 July / Film Analysis Course
Three-weeks, non-residential
In this editing analysis course, four feature-length films will be deconstructed according to their cinematic elements in order to allow students to acquire a deeper understanding of how the art of editing relates to classical storytelling and/or more complex storytelling in contemporary cinema.

7 6–23 August 2018 / Other Ways of Seeing: A History of Film Form
Three-weeks, non-residential
Developed with practicing filmmakers in mind, the course proceeds from the practicalities of camera, composition, editing, sound, etc. Film clips and full-length classic films illustrate masterful technique, film form and style and students learn to analyse and appreciate some the greatest films in history.

8 September / tba / Post-Production
4-weeks, non-residential
This course aims to encourage students to take charge of closing the edit and finessing a film to professional standards. The classroom-based course includes exercises to improve capacity in: locking the cut, working with directors and producers, subtitling, the art and science of colour correction and organising and exporting tracks for the mix.

9 October 2018 / tba / Sound Design
Four-weeks, non-residential
An experienced international tutor will work with graduates of previous courses in order to introduce new students to both the technical (Digital Audio Workstations, ProTools software) as well as the artistic aspects of sound post-production and design.

10 Two trips in 2018 / The Yangon Film School Travelling Cinema Project
This outreach programme of film screenings and discussions at one or more sites in regional and/or remote sites across the country includes curated film screenings of YFS films such as the ‘Women & Peace’ documentaries and docuanimations produced during 2017 and 2018 as well as participatory video facilitations to help communities make their own short films about topics of their own choosing.
Films Produced

In 2017, YFS students made eight documentaries on the topic of ‘Women & Peace’ plus three films about the courses. They also facilitated the making of two Participatory Videos as part of the Travelling Cinema trip to Kyaukpadaung near Mandalay (see p. 22 for details).

WOMEN & PEACE IN MYANMAR
As part of this programme, YFS second-year students went out across Myanmar to capture footage on the topic and edit it into eight documentaries of between 10-20 minutes in length (see course description on p. 10). The resulting films are:

Child of the Revolution  
(Director: Aye Nilar Kyaw; Editor: Sai Nyi Nyi)
For over sixty years, the Karen National Union was at war with the Burmese military, known as Tatmadaw. In this elegiac portrait a young Karen woman reflects on her family’s years of struggle during the conflict in Myanmar’s south-east and looks ahead to the challenges of securing lasting peace.

Far From Yangon  
(Director & Editor: Thida Swe)
Three young Burmese women from Yangon travel over a thousand miles north to Myanmar’s Kachin State where they come face to face with the consequences of the continued armed conflict and meet some of the many displaced people in this war-torn state.

The Go-Between  
(Director: La Pyae Ko; Editor: Khin Warso)
Soft-spoken but strong-minded Daw Chin Chin is a mediator between the Chin National Front and the Myanmar government. As she navigates a determinedly conciliatory path between nationwide conference and village hall, soldiers and civilians, men and women, we begin to understand the vital role that women can play in the country’s fragile peace process.

The Good Woman of South Dagon  
(Director: Win Thu Myo; Editor: Hnin Ei Hlaing)
The elderly but by no means frail Daw Tin May Oo is a no-nonsense member of Myanmar’s ruling NLD party serving in Yangon’s South Dagon Township. She supports her neighbours and is good to her friends and especially her cats – whether they like it or not. But beneath her hilarious ‘tough love’ approach she embodies the strength and compassion of Myanmar’s civil society.
Films Produced

**Mother At Arms**  (Director: Nu Nu Hlaing; Editor: Zin Mar Oo)
Mi Sue Pwint is a member of the All Burma Students’ Democratic Front, the student army formed after nationwide protests were brutally crushed by Myanmar’s military dictatorship in 1988. This film tells her extraordinary story as both a leading revolutionary and mother and describes how she is now actively engaged in the peace process in her deeply conflicted country.

**Mother’s Burden**  (Director: Cherry Thein; Editor: May Htoo Cho)
This story of one older, single mother’s struggles in rural Bagan and her misguided choices for her daughter reflects the conservative and sometimes ill-fated approaches to parenting that still prevail in today’s Myanmar.

**The Peacekeeper**  (Director: Aye Mya Hlaing; Editor: Mi Mi Lwin)
It is estimated that around 100,000 people have been displaced by civil war in Myanmar’s Kachin State since 2011 and are now living in camps for ‘internally displaced people’ (IDPs). This heartfelt film shows how public and private lives are intertwined in these camps and describes one resourceful woman’s valiant efforts to keep the peace.

**Seeds of Sadness**  (Director & Editor: Thae Zar Chi Khaing)
In spite of a nationwide ceasefire, armed conflict persists in Myanmar and landmines contaminate many parts of the country. Describing their effect on one family in East Bago, this film gives a dignified voice to the victims of Myanmar’s civil war and makes a powerful plea for peace.

All eight films will be released in 2018 as both single and compilation DVDs; the films will also be disseminated as part of a widespread multi-platform distribution strategy involving curated screenings in partnership with state-level entities such as the Joint Monitoring Committee, but also NGOs, CSOs, broadcasters and the filmmakers themselves. They will also be entered for screenings at film festivals around the world.

The three films about the courses, filmed and edited by YFS students to explain the process of making the ‘Women & Peace’ films during the Advanced Editing Course, Post-Production Coaching and The Art of Sound Design will be included on the compilation DVDs.
Yangon Film Services is the production company attached to the School. Established to provide meaningful and sustainable work for YFS students and graduates, it actively seeks cooperation with local and international non-governmental organisations, capacity building organisations and aid agencies in Myanmar. It also provides skilled local crews e.g. for international production companies coming to film in the country.

Yangon Film Services’ philosophy is that by researching and recording real-life stories for the development sector, the School’s filmmakers acquire a deeper understanding of their environment and themselves. In addition, the filmmaking skills of YFS graduates afford organisations an invaluable means to communicate their message to the wider community and tell engaging stories about the impact that integrated development activities are having on the people of Myanmar.

In 2017 a total of 35 YFS students and alumni were able to earn income working as freelance crew members and filmmakers for nine projects commissioned by Yangon Film Services. YFS worked with high-profile national and international NGOs and other organisations including the EU delegation in Myanmar, USAID, the UN, the British Council (via MyJustice and Pyoe Pin NGOs) and Telenor Myanmar. Productions included:

**Now I Can Read – Giving Children in Myanmar a Second Chance**  (5 min. Burmese with English subtitles)
Made for the EU delegation in Myanmar and funded by the European Union, UNICEF and the Danish International Development Agency, this charming short film gives insight into the Quality Basic Education Programme which is offering some of the 2.7 million children in Myanmar who are unable to go to school the chance to attend evening classes and learn how to read and write.

**USAID Land Tenure Project in Myanmar**  (30 min. in total, Burmese with English subtitles)
Four short films about different aspects of the tenure strengthening process in USAID’s Land Tenure Project. The films cover the process from initial engagement to mapping techniques and results presentation. With land-grabbing currently a hot button topic in Myanmar, the films are designed to be used by civil society organisations as a guide to promote land rights and security and enhance civic engagement.

**Healthy Sprouts – Myanmar’s First Kindergarten Year**  (14 min. with Burmese and English subtitles)
Made for Save the Children and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Finland), IKEA Foundation and NOKIA Foundation, this lively short film was shot in Hsipaw in Shan State and Pakokku in Magway Region and captures some of the experiences of parents, teachers and children during the first year of Save the Children’s historic new Early Childhood Care and Development programme.

**Warmer Days – Myanmar in the Age of Climate Change**  (18 min. in Burmese with English subtitles)
Made for UN Habitat in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance and the European Union, this beautifully shot film explores the often invisible yet dramatic effects of climate change on rising sea-levels, salinisation of land and water sources and reduction in agricultural productivity due to rising temperatures. The film also shows some of the solutions and how, via research, smart planning and increased awareness, Myanmar’s people and its nature can adjust to the warmer days to come.
Yangon Film Services: Script Development

In 2017 Yangon Film Services was also responsible for overseeing the development and writing of two major fiction script projects:

### Digital Smartphone Series for MIDO/Telenor Myanmar

In April 2017, MIDO (Myanmar ICT for Development Organisation) commissioned YFS to create 30 x 3 minute Myanmar-language scripts for a compelling drama series with interactive elements suitable for Smartphone viewing. The aim of the series is to bridge the digital divide by explaining, in an entertaining way, how Smartphones can be a versatile tool with real benefits for everyday life in Myanmar. The main target audience is rural-dwelling people, who may not be familiar with the range of functions of a Smartphone and how to securely use the internet.

Working closely with YFS screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews, Yangon Film Services recruited six YFS-trained scriptwriters to work on the series. The script mentor and writers formatted the total of 90 minutes of screen-time into six seasons, each of 15 minutes in length. Each season (told in 5 x 3 minute episodes, i.e. short enough to be viewed on a Smartphone) focussed on a particular learning objective for the series and provided a dramatic storyline to teach this objective. To promote learning, the writers included two interactive elements in each script. Audiences have to pick the correct multiple choice answer to a relevant question in order to continue watching the story.

The series, which tells the story of a love triangle between three young adults in a village in central Myanmar, looks at issues including how to set up and securely use a Facebook account, choose secure passwords, send and receive emails, use a Smartphone for job searches and finding information useful to businesses (in this case a tailor’s shop), learn a language and take other free online courses as well as how to avoid phishing scams, sexting blackmail and online bullying.

The scripts went through three drafts and were delivered to MIDO/Telenor in July 2017. Telenor is currently filming and editing the series.
The Sun, The Moon & The Truth for the British Council via MyJustice and Pyoe Pin Institute

In 2017, YFS-trained scriptwriters – again working in close collaboration with YFS screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews – completed the 5 x 10 half-hour scripts for the second series of *The Sun, The Moon & The Truth*, a television drama series in the ‘edutainment’ genre designed to teach predominantly rural audiences about the rule of law.

The scripts tackled some of the key legal issues currently being faced by people in Myanmar including:

- **Money-Lending** and issues arising from illegal practices in the informal money-lending market
- **Civil Service Corruption** and other bad practices in the civil service and what journalists and ordinary citizens can do about it
- **Drug Addiction** as a public health issue rather than a crime and the effectiveness of drug treatment programmes
- **Sexual Violence** and victim-blaming
- **Land-Grabbing** describing ways in which a community can come together and use legal and political methods to resist illegal developments and the misappropriation of land

After intensive collaboration with a number of NGOs and experts in each of the legal and social fields highlighted in the stories, the scripts were delivered at the end of 2017. Series Two is currently being shot and produced by high-profile Myanmar film director Aung Ko Latt and producer Grace Swe Zin Htaik with a cast of well-known Myanmar actors. The editing and post-production of the series will be overseen by Yangon Film Services in 2018 and undertaken by YFS-trained editors, sound designers, colour graders and title/subtitle designers mentored by YFS editing tutor Melanie Sandford (Australia), who edits many high-profile TV series in Australia.

‘True Fictions’ Crime Series for MYPOL Myanmar

In November 2017, MYPOL, an EU-funded agency supporting the reform of the Myanmar Police Force, approached Yangon Film Services to develop a drama series designed to showcase best practice in the country’s police force. YFS organised an information day with MYPOL, two retired police colonels, members of prominent CSOs and 15 of the School’s writers and filmmakers to discuss the possible content, stories and format for such a series. This was the first time many of the YFS students had actually met and spoken to police personnel. Development of this series is ongoing and, it is hoped, will come to fruition in 2019.
YFS Films and Students at Festivals in 2017

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

In 2017, 36 YFS films screened at 35 festivals in 21 different countries including Thailand, the UK, Pakistan, South Korea, Germany, Malaysia, Japan and the USA. The School’s films won a total of eight prizes and five students had the opportunity to travel with their films to attend a festival in person. Among the School’s most successful festival films of 2017 were:

Sugar & Spice (15 min documentary; directed by Mi Mi Lwin)
This lovingly filmed portrait depicts the filmmaker’s own parents who eke out a living making ‘jaggery’ sweets from toddy palm syrup in the central dry zone. After great success in its debut year of 2016, the film continued to be a festival favourite in 2017, particularly in Japan at the Short Shorts Film Festival where it won the Grand Prix, the Asia International Competition and the Governor of Tokyo Award. Mi Mi Lwin travelled to the festival in Tokyo in June to collect her three awards. Her film also won Best Student Documentary Award at the Watersprite Student Film Festival in Cambridge, UK in March.

32 Souls (25 min documentary; directed by Sai Naw Kham)
An intriguing portrait of an old woman from Mong Htet in northern Shan State in Myanmar who looks back on a life marked by privation and loss. Her memories are interwoven with images that touch on this conflicted state’s past, present and future. After screening at Wathann and DOK Leipzig in 2016, the film was selected for the prestigious Busan Film Festival in South Korea in 2017 as well as the International Film Festival Innsbruck in Austria, FESTEF in Kichevo, Serbia and Film South Asia in Kathmandu, Nepal where it won the Nabil Bank Award for Best Student Film.

films screened in 2017: 36 films at 35 festivals in 21 different countries winning 8 prizes
Most screened: My Leg & Awarded Film: Sugar & Spice
4 screenings / 4 awards
EVENTS
Now an established Yangon event, the 2017 YFS Annual Screening was hosted by the Institut Français in Yangon on Friday, 24 November 2017.

Around 325 students, alumni and guests from the media, arts and development sectors and civil society in Myanmar attended the evening reception which was opened by Cyprien Francois, Head of Cooperation and Director of the Institut Francais de Birmanie and moderated by YFS Director Lindsey Merrison.

Before inviting members of the 2017 Goethe-Institut Myanmar-YFS Documentary Competition jury (see p. 48) up to the stage to announce the winning films, Lindsey talked briefly about the work of the School’s production arm Yangon Film Services and presented a short film entitled Now I Can Read made for the EU about how their informal education programme is helping children not able to attend School (see p. 41).

After announcing a new cooperation with the French Embassy to continue the School’s successful Travelling Cinema programme and participatory video facilitations up and down the country, the PV The Clean Team, made by a community at Inle Lake in Shan State was screened (see pp. 29). Two of the PV training participants – Ma Hnin Phyu and Aung Myat Thu – had travelled to the screening from their home in Nyaung Shwe and came onto the stage to discuss their experience of making the film.

Finland has been a staunch and valuable partner of YFS since its inception 12 years ago. Lindsey was delighted to welcome to the stage the Finnish Ambassador to Myanmar, Ms Riikka Laatu, who applauded the School’s work and emphasised the importance of participatory processes for social change. The four winning films of the Documentary Competition (see p. 48) were then screened.

The Screening was closed by Director of the Goethe-Institut Myanmar Mr Franz Xaver Augustin, who said he ‘never failed to be astonished by the consistent quality of YFS films’ and hoped that the School would secure the support it deserved to continue to provide valuable training for many years to come.

YFS @ Pansuriya Film Screenings

Once a month at the Pansuriya Gallery and Restaurant, Bo Galay Zay Street, Yangon

As part of the School’s outreach work and aim to introduce its films and filmmakers to a wider Myanmar and international audience, YFS began a monthly screening in 2017 in cooperation with Aung Soe Min (who also set up the Pansodan Gallery) at the Pansuriya Gallery and Restaurant in Downtown Yangon.

The screenings are free of charge and open to all. Each month three or four of the School’s short documentaries are shown, often in the presence of one or more of the filmmakers who are then on hand to field questions from the audience about their film.

The event kicked off in January with the screening of three films firmly rooted in the architecture, culture and people of Yangon:

No. 62 Pansodan Street (12’21’ directed by Cho Pyone)
This short documentary takes the viewer behind the crumbling façade of one of Yangon’s grand old colonial edifices – known to many as the ‘Lokanat gallery building’ on account of the famous art gallery on the first floor – to meet some of the people who call this place home.

My Grandfather’s House (13’45” directed by Shunn Lei Swe Yee)
Thakin Htein Win’s granddaughter reminisces about the old teak house in Yangon where she grew up – a house which was once a meeting place for some of the architects of Burma’s independence movement, in which her grandfather played a pivotal role.

Insein Rhythm (10’45” directed by Soe Moe Aung)
A humorously edited portrait of the sights, sounds and rhythms of Yangon’s Insein railway station – a stone’s throw from the country’s infamous Insein prison.

Topics of subsequent YFS@Pansuriya screenings in 2017 included ‘the environment’, ‘dreams’, ‘family life’, ‘destiny’, ‘women & peace’ and ‘love’.
In November 2017 the eight ‘Women & Peace in Myanmar’ films were entered into the Goethe Institut Myanmar-Yangon Film School Documentary Awards and were judged by an illustrious jury of five development and arts professionals from Myanmar, Sweden and Germany:

**THE WINNING FILMS**

1st Prize Diamond Award
**Mother at Arms**
by Nu Nu Hlaing

Joint 2nd Prize Ruby Award
**The Good Woman of South Dagon**
by Win Thu Myo

Joint 2nd Prize Ruby Award
**Seeds of Sadness**
by Thae Zar Chi Khaing

3rd Prize Jade Award
**Child of the Revolution**
By Aye Nilar Kyaw
Jade Award

Child of Revolution

directed by Aye Nilar Kyaw

Ruby Award

Seeds of Sadness

directed by Thae Zar Chi Khaing

Ruby Award

The Good Woman of South Dagon

directed by Win Thu Myo
## VI

### Financials 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Funding 2017</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>99,111 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIKES - The Finnish Foundation for Media, Communication and Development/</td>
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<td>Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>Goethe Institut</td>
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<td>Donations and membership fees</td>
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### Yangon Film School Funding 2017

- **Total funding in 2017:** 394,834 EUR
VI  Financials 2017

Yangon Film School Expenditure 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Course delivery costs</td>
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<td>Office and Training Venue Rentals</td>
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<td>Equipment and Services</td>
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<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>6,475 €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising and Administration</td>
<td>149,810 €</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure in 2017: 394,834 EUR
In 2017, 36 YFS films screened at 35 festivals in 21 different countries including Thailand, the UK, Pakistan, South Korea, Germany, Malaysia, Japan and USA.
Ever since its inception in the dark days of the dictatorship in 2005, Yangon Film School has had the long-term goal of handing over the School to local management. YFS will continue to work with a roster of international tutors, who are greatly valued by students and alumni for their technical expertise as well as their robust and innovative storytelling skills. However, these tutors are already working side-by-side with a cohort of locally trained filmmakers, in particular the School’s train-to-teach alumni.

In 2017 the School took another step closer towards achieving this goal with the creation of the local NGO, Yangon Film Foundation (YFF). YFS is currently working closely with this NGO to build capacity; YFF will eventually have oversight of all the School’s activities. The School continues to engage the government to nominate a permanent home for YFS. A permanent building will not only bring greater stability; it will also allow the School to work on its long-cherished ambition to become a media resource and a cultural hub, serving not only its students and alumni but the whole city: with a cinema screening the School's own films and landmark works of documentary and art-house cinema, a café where people can congregate to discuss and network, and a film archive and library where hard-to-get films can be viewed and analysed.

One of the major hurdles is, as ever, funding. The School has worked hard to overcome its 2017 budget shortfall which at one point posed an existential threat to the organisation. Finances are on a more even keel for 2018, and, having selected a new multi-ethnic intake of six men and six women at the end of 2017, YFS is delighted to be able to offer another edition of its flagship Art of Documentary Filmmaking for Beginners course with associated trainings in editing, postproduction, sound design, film history and analysis. This means another cohort of students will embark on their journey to becoming filmmakers. YFS is also continuing its valuable Travelling Cinema Project to bring its films, as well as participatory video facilitations, to some of the most marginalised communities in Myanmar. And, following the successful 2017 DocuAnimation course, in 2018 students will learn to make longer animated documentaries, this time on the subject of violence against women in conflict areas.

YFS is a valuable organisation that achieves tangible results. We therefore once again call upon our funders and supporters, upon everyone who has seen and been engaged by a YFS film, who has worked with its filmmakers and recognises the School's worth to join us in spreading the word about our continuing fundraising drive. Please help YFS to train the next generation of young Myanmar talents in the artistic, technical, practical and ethical aspects of filmmaking – and give a voice to a population who have long been silenced.

‘Whenever I say I am YFS student or I see YFS and my name together in a list of credits, that is a special moment for me. YFS means more to me than just a school or training centre.’

Su Su Hlaing, joined YFS in 2013
The Yangon Film School would like to thank all of its partners in 2017 for their support.