

Joint Press Release

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END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

Yangon Film School docuanimations portray powerful testimonies of survivors of gender-based violence in Myanmar

Yangon Film School has created three powerful documentary animations based on testimonies from survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in Myanmar. The docuanimations were created with the support from the Gender Equality Network, German's Heinrich Boell Foundation and the government of Sweden.

Three Burmese women, who would like to remain anonymous, have shared their heart-breaking stories with students from the Yangon Film School. These three women's real-life experiences were captured in three sixty-second animated films created during the School's first course in docuanimation – an innovative approach which combines audio testimonials with animation. Planned for International Women Day on 8 March the official launch of these docuanimations aims to increase understanding that violence is not a private affair but a matter of social concern and make audiences aware of the different types of violence that encompass gender-based violence .

May Sabe Phyu, Director of the Gender Equality Network: “Violence against women continues to be a grave human rights concern in Myanmar. Recent research from GEN (Behind the Silence: Violence Against Women and their Resilience, Myanmar, 2015) highlights multiple forms of violence experienced by women, including emotional, physical, economic and sexually-intimate-partner-violence. Sexual harassment is a common experience for women throughout the country.”

The three one-minute animated documentaries were produced during a workshop led by two international, award-winning tutors. The three films highlight issues identified by YFS students with regard to key concepts and models for prevention of violence against women and leave the viewer with the message that violence is never acceptable and is inappropriate behaviour. Covering a different aspect of GBV – domestic violence, sexual violence and cyber violence – each animated documentary aims to encourage audiences to look at the issue afresh and engage with the topic personally instead of distancing themselves.

YFS Student May Htoo Cho: “I think that docuanimation is a great approach for sensitive topics. It allows you to express things that would be difficult for a protagonist to share in a direct-to-camera interview. It gives the story a whole new level.”

Links to docuanimation spots on youtube:

Clip I / <https://youtu.be/ocGNPICWzAw>

Clip II / <https://youtu.be/Mp49q2l6uew>

Clip III / <https://youtu.be/C390C4nMLgU>

Please note that due to film classification regulations these three spots may only be released from March 8th onwards.

The animated documentaries will be distributed nationwide to press and radio, television and social media networks, as well as GEN' substantial network of CSOs. Audiences in Myanmar will have the opportunity to see them on MRTV channel and DVB, among others. They will be made available for any organisation wishing to use them as a part of their awareness rising.

__About the Docanimation Training

At the end of 2016 Yangon Film School partnered with GEN, Heinrich Boell Foundation and SIDA to organise a training during which YFS students learned how to combine documentary testimonials with animation to produce three short animated documentaries on gender-based violence (GBV) in Myanmar. The three one-minute docuanimations that emerged from the training will be broadcast on television networks and distributed across a variety of other platforms. The training, which took place over a total of six weeks and covered crucial aspects of research and sensitive interviewing as well as innovative and emotive animation techniques, resulted in three strong animated documentaries produced in Burmese with English and Burmese subtitles that effectively communicate key messages about GBV issues in Myanmar.

Nine students from across the country aged between 22 and 38 years were trained in docuanimation by Lisa Crafts (USA), an award-winning filmmaker, animator and educator specialising in docuanimation and Paromita Vohra, an award-winning filmmaker, writer and gender activist from India.

'This course was designed to achieve two aims,' says Yangon Film School founder Lindsey Merrison. 'Firstly, we wanted to help the students understand the nuances of gender based violence – its root causes, its emotional impact on victims and the way in which the structural, cultural and psychological aspects of the phenomenon are interwoven. At the same time we sought to render these themes cinematically to a wider audience as effective and moving films, not simply didactic instructions. In this way, the course sought to provide students with new skills in documentary narrative approaches.'

__Synopsis of the three docuanimations END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – This one-minute docuanimation tells the story of a successful businesswoman who is beaten by her husband at home. While the protagonist's voice describes the psychological impact of control that her husband exercises through early romantic intensity and later through psychological, emotional and physical violence, the animation provides a moving, intimate description of how violence occurs – repeatedly, for years. The film also dispels the stereotype that domestic violence happens only among the poor or 'uneducated'; the protagonist's middle class background demonstrates resoundingly that domestic violence is a dynamic of gender,

not class or community.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE – This one-minute docuanimation features the heart-breaking story of a working woman who is raped by a man in her neighbourhood and is struggling to overcome the despair she feels and the insensitivity she experiences from social groups and administrative bodies alike. The protagonist's testimonial focuses on two specific aspects: one being the fact that rape is often committed by a person known to the victim, and the other that society tends to blame the victim for having taken risks that invited danger and ostracises them – instead of blaming the prevalence of violence and dealing with perpetrators.

CYBER VIOLENCE – As lives are increasingly lived on the internet, our digital selves become a part of our identity. This one-minute docuanimation focuses on the high incidence of violence experienced by women online through 'doxing' (publishing private or identifying information about a particular individual on the Internet, typically with malicious intent). The protagonist of this film describes her experiences of shaming when her ex-boyfriend publishes online private pictures and intimate information, inviting virtual sexual mob-violence and relentless harassment by unknown men. Reflecting on an increasingly common experience for young women, this film makes a plea for a woman's right to exercise agency around her intimate life.

Context:

Gender-based violence (GBV) describes any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its survivors. Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world and yet is the most silent. Survivors of violence often do not report or seek assistance due to fear of reprisal or stigmatisation.

According to Myanmar's Gender Equality Network (GEN), little is known of the magnitude of violence encountered by women and girls in Myanmar as gender-focused information and sex-disaggregated data is severely lacking. However, a qualitative study published by GEN on women's experiences of abuse and violence by their husbands and other men has contributed significantly to filling a gap in the understanding of the consequences and coping strategies of women. The study's findings note not only the frequent and debilitating nature of violence against women, but also its role in cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement, especially among marginalized groups. The findings also point to a lack of available support services for the survivors, and limited faith in the justice system.

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