



Social Circus Myanmar (SCM) Dry Season 2017-18 Project Report

Author: Jules Howarth

Date: October 10th 2018.

Project delivery ran November 25th 2017 to March 28th 2018 with Jules Howarth traveling to Yangon for that period.

Yangon based colleagues – Ko Pho Ke and Julien Ariza also delivered training in early November for S4SK kids and the International Social Circus Day on April 7th 2018.



Plans and Results for 2017-18 Season

(Plan)1. Establish a Myanmar company – not-for-profit - to oversee activities and apply for funds.

(Result)1. On March 17th 2018 we held the first meeting to create “Social Circus Myanmar” as a Myanmar not-for-profit company. Myanmar colleague refer to it as an NGO (none Governmental Organisation) which is a definition a little different to how we in Europe see a NGO, but we will sometimes use the term in this report. The n-f-p company in Myanmar is what we think of as a ‘social enterprise’, private company limited by guarantee (not shares).

The Board of Directors:

Daw Phyu Phyu Mar

U Kyaw Oo

Ko Pho Ke

Ko Than Htut

Ko Kyaw Min Soe

Ko Tout Tout Kyaw

with informal advisers:

Julien Ariza

Jean-Noel Walkowiak

Jules Howarth



Setting up the NGO

The paperwork process: Mem & Arts, Reg. Documents, personal ID, etc. to be provided to three different offices: Ward, City, Region. Ko Than Htut has done all this and we await the response from the last office and possibly approval from Naypyidaw, the capital govnt. Administration. The process started in March and is still in process. Action: ongoing.

(Plan)2. Continue regular workshops and training with 6 groups

Mary Chapman School for Deaf People

Yadana Foster Home

S4SK/H4SS (Scholarships4streetkids and Help4ShiningStars) a UK funded charity

Thanlyin Boys Training Centre

Taw Mae Phar Hostel

Eden Centre for Disabled People

(Result)2. We delivered workshops to these groups on a weekly basis.

We also made contact with [Sonne Social Organisation](#) and ran weekly sessions with 8 teachers so that they could play with their kids at their 3 day-care centres. We sold them juggling balls and hula-hoops and loan them some props.



We are on their web site [here](#)

We hope to continue to work with Sonne Social Organisation in 2018-19

(Plan)3. To expand those groups participants by 50%. Concentrating on making current participants teach new members to the group: sharing skills is vital.

(Result)3. We had some success with this plan to expand groups, but didn't reach the target (which was ambitious, given physical space and resources). We did increase the duration of workshop to 2 hours at Yadana on Sundays.

We continued to encourage skills-sharing in every workshop and we saw that improve in each group. The kids in the circus groups are teaching the other kids in the schools we find, but we find it a challenge to increase the group sizes (because of space and available time) Most schools and organisation want circus as after-school activities and before dark.

We find that, as usual, we have to fit in around school-time and their core activities.



Summary:

Kids engaged weekly with our core 6 groups (over 16 weeks): 150 per week

Drop-in workshop at event engagements: 150

Regular weekly workshop with international school kids (for 10 weeks): 38

One-off workshops (booked to raise funds): 140

A total of individual engagements: 1830 (approx.)

Notes:

We work with a combination of Schools & Social Organisations: they engage us to work 'after school hours' mostly. In November, December and early January they have time for our extra-curriculum activities, but as examinations loom in February they drop the circus sessions as they focus their students on examination preparation. Schools often close after the examinations in mid feb and march, or the kids return to their home villages. So whilst in Nov and Dec we have engagement to 160 kids a week, this diminishes to 60 to 80 kids a week in Feb and March.

Recommended plan for 2018-19: start earlier in November and finish end of February 2019, to maximise engagement.

(Plan)4. Translate more training/skills materials and information into Burmese.

(Result)4. We showed some groups circus videos as inspiration which was received well. Jules and Julien are working on a training book (Julien's illustrations, Jules' text) and if we can finish it then Daw Phyu Phyu Mar will translate. A little progress made, but slow. To find a translator who understands circus skills and can describe them in the Burmese language is a challenge.

(Plan)5. Find and bring on board 1 – 4 young Myanmar adults to begin to train in how to deliver workshops.

(Result)5. We only added Ko Than Htut to our regular team. We will work on this in 2018-19 season.



Our challenges include:

Circus is not a known or understood art-form in Myanmar. So the idea that you could earn a good wage from circus is beyond general understanding as a possible job.

We don't have the capacity to recruit and train young adults under 18. There are so many, quite correct (!), safeguarding issues. We can identify some young people who are learning the skills really well and who could become our trainers but they are under 18 and performing or theatre or circus are not 'respectable' professions in this culture. And we just don't have the funds or capacity to do a proper job of taking them on.

If a suitable young adult studying education (to become a teacher) like the circus activities and sees its value as an educational tool, he/she will not deviate from his/her core mission to become a qualified teacher and get a secure teaching job.

A suitable young theatre actor is a better possibility but we'll have to talk them into it and pay them equivalent money. As circus is unknown it's just not understood as theatre... yet.

(Plan)6. To trial a week-long physical training location where participants can learn more effectively.

(Result)6. Didn't happen – lack of funds and time slots possible for our groups

(Plan)7. To try to do outreach workshops with groups outside Yangon region.

(Result)7. We had offers to go to IDP camps, but the orgs making the offers didn't provide the necessary parts i.e. transport, food, legal permissions. Jules was happy to go but they need to organise it (as we are not a legal company in Myanmar so can't get 'permissions'). Also we don't have props to leave behind at the camps for continued play after an intervention, which is not the right way to go about intervention – we came, we played, we left taking all the toys away! Issues about abandonment abound in this situation.

(Plan)8. To create a small Performance Troupe of 12 young people to show their skills as a Show which we can show at events and to the media.

(Result)8. This didn't happen. Though there enough young people across the various circus groups to make a 'troupe' they still don't have the necessary performance skills and we lack the capacity to bring a core group together on a regular basis to train properly to make a quality show. Better not to make a poor Show where the kids fail to do the best they can. This is work in progress for 2018-19.

(Plan)9. To find regular funding from Myanmar companies and NGO sources in Myanmar.

(Result)9. This is pending setting up the registration of a local NGO which is in process.

(Plan)10. To improve SCM language skills and communication skills.

(Result)10. Jules' Burmese language got a little better. There was no time and money available at the start of the season to pay for Jules to take paid-for classes in Burmese. Julien Ariza helped a lot. Ko Than Htut has pretty good English. Ko Pho Ke helped a lot as always. Daw Phyu Phyu Mar helped with translations in workshops and with written documents.

Core information translations to Burmese were added to website.

Some kind folks translated the website core info into Italian and Spanish, but I have yet to add these.

(Plan)11. Improve our Evaluation tools and define our Outputs.

(Result)11. Not much improvement here. Teachers continue to say and write positive feedback.

(Plan)12. To continue to deliver workshops and shows for fees at events that have resources: e.g. Big British Day Out, Francophile, International schools, events.

(Result)12. We had a pretty successful run of engagements in Yangon that earned us income.



1 Kids Birthday Party; 2 Cubs, Scouts, Beavers and Guides; The Big British Day Out; British International School workshops; Sales to Sonne Social Organisation; French International School Joseph Kessel project meeting S4SK; Myanmar International School Yangon day-out to Yadana Foster Home; 1 donation of \$100.

A total of US\$ 1,350 and MMK 1,439,550 which means in US\$ terms a total of US\$ 2,415

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MISY – Myanmar International School Yangon brought 50 of their kids to Yadana Foster Home to engage with the Yadana Foster Home young people for a day. We also hired Myanmar Poets & Storytellers group into that day so there was Storytelling and Circus, and we provided food for all the Myanmar participants.

Julien Ariza was teaching at the Joseph Kessel School and his class did a social project on S4SK kids and we brought them together for a day. The French kids donated 4 big boxes of unwanted/old/pre-loved toys, shoes, clothing, bits n bobs as a donation to the S4SK kids.



We made that all possible and connected international school kids with Myanmar kids, using circus as the common language/engagement process.

(Plan)13. To raise the profile of Social Circus Myanmar in the media and to explain the value of social circus.

(Result)13. Everyone we connect with ‘gets it’ but converting that into newspaper and magazine articles is still a challenge. Facebook likes grew. Twitter doesn’t really happen in Myanmar.

I think that once the local NGO is created we can make that news and let the Directors drive it forwards as then it be news delivered by Myanmar people about a project that is run by Myanmar people for Myanmar kids/children. This project has so much more traction if it’s run from Myanmar by Myanmar people.

We re-made our logo using a classical image of a Burmese chinlon player and circus props



Finance and Accounting

Our accounting is detailed and expressed in terms of MMK (Myanmar Kyat), USD\$ or GBP£ in the attached Excel Workbook. We believe in open and transparent accounting.

Book-keeping is complex as it includes three currencies, changing foreign exchange rate, and because we started the project without all funding in place (awaiting Crowdfunding) Jules Howarth had to front a lot of money personally.

Book-keeping is held in excel format and also in QuickBooks, which provides us with a way to produce Accounts.

Summary:

Total expenditure: \$ 9,057 or £6,579 or MMK 12,039,224

Total income: \$9,081 or £6,587 or MMK 12,060,217

Of which...

Money spent in UK (Jules' flights, travel, insurance, visa, etc.): £1096

Money spent in Myanmar: £5483

How the money is spent:

We do pay our Myanmar colleagues for use of their transport and for teaching circus workshops. Nominally: \$10 per hour for working as a circus trainer and hire of transport at MMK 5000 per hour. And for training time at MMK 5000 per hour (approx. US\$3.75).

For One 'worker' (Jules Howarth) we pay for the costs of accommodation and food in Yangon, airfare London to Yangon return, professional insurance (in case of accident/medical emergency), travel costs in UK to and from airport, Visa Costs and travel to renew Visa. We do not pay for personal expenses. Jules provides his own Public Liability Insurance.

We do not pay for Administration costs for running Social Circus Myanmar to UK personnel. Planning, administration, accounting is provided for free.

We do cover other costs: transport of goods from UK to Myanmar, making of equipment in Yangon, local (in Yangon) transport costs for local or visiting international artists or helpers and we provide food for the day that they are working.

International guest tutors are Volunteers and we provide them with food for the days they work and accommodation if it's possible without cost (which we were able to do this season as the house we rented had three bedrooms and thus space for guests); we do not pay for visas or for getting to and from Myanmar.



Other

We failed to import 80kgs of donated juggling props into Myanmar in 2017-18 season.

It sat packed up in UK ready to go but I couldn't find a partner organisation to import it without possibly/probably incurring a substantial import duty from Customs. The packages are now in my garage awaiting dispatch (it cost £119 for the total gathering of props donations and delivery costs.)

UK to MM Airfreight cost were approx. \$800

And mandatory handling charges at airport in Yangon are \$200

What I didn't want to happen is Customs to then decide that we need to pay \$800 or \$1000 as import tax on top. Money which we didn't have in cash.

I worked for months with Action Aid, Eden Centre, Smile Foundation and other organisations that I asked to get the right paperwork in order to avoid Import Duty but none of them have the right papers to import. A commercial import licence leads to the big import duty cost and Myanmar Customs are known for random excessive charges or just cash donations to the Tea Funds to facilitate import. Julien also approached French companies and schools but had no success. So in the end we gave up and left the potential funds for use this next season. We really do need more props and this is a priority for 2018-19 season.

Guest Tutors and Trainers

We were very fortunate to have a series of international guests who helped at workshops, trained our students and supported us



Rakel Moreno. Ariel specialist, hula hooper. She visited us in 2016-17 and raised €540 from a fundraising event in Catalonia to support this year's project. Brilliant person.



Jill Ridgewell and Phill Lang – from New Zealand, friends of Jude and Phil, and have donated money in previous Crowdfunding, Jill has a background in social work and equality networks in NZ and Phill works with SEN young people in woodwork and creative making. Brilliant fellows.



Milan – social circus specialist from Germany, with experience of social circus, working with refugees in Germany – Turkish, Syrian and other nationalities. He was a great and professional teacher. Banjo Circus – Lea Rovero and Frank Powlesland - Old mates of mine who came to Yangon in 2016-17 also with music, lasso, unicycle and circus skills.

Circo Inzir – who tour the world each year and this year was South East Asia, but they only contacted us 3 days before they were due to arrive in Myanmar. We got them to do a workshop and Show for our group at Yadana Foster Home and then spent a day at the circus house rented by Jules. They were fabulous. And then went on travels to do shows in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia. See fb Circo Inzir for video and story.

Connections

Julien, Jules and Jean-Noel met with the Asian TYA (Theatre for Young Audiences). They are a network of people running children's festivals in Japan, Thailand and Malaysia. This meeting was funded by Japan Foundation Asia Centre. <http://tya-asia.com/en/home-en/>



We all got along well and I think they would support a Yangon Children's Theatre Festival if we can come up with a plan. That is something to see if the new Myanmar-led Social Circus Myanmar want to pursue. It's a great idea, but needs support and funding in Myanmar.

Yours faithfully,

Jules Howarth

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Contact information

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End of Project Report document.