

Social Circus Myanmar Report 2018-19 Season

Jan 12th 2019 – March 12th 2019 (continuing to April 7th 2019)

(We will refer to Social Circus Myanmar as SCM)

Report for Donors and Supporters. October 21st 2019



Overview

Our usual planned pattern of working during the Myanmar 'Dry Season' from November to March was shorter in this edition due to the fact that the Project Manager (Jules Howarth)'s mum became unwell in November. Once Jules' Mum (91 years old) had fully recovered, Jules went to Myanmar from Jan 12th – March 12th.



The Project continued with the local team running weekly workshops until 7th April, ending with the International Social Circus Day event.

Local team

Ko Than Htut – professional Actor and our lead Myanmar circus tutor.

Ko Thaw Zin – professional taxi driver and our trainee circus tutor.

Jules Howarth (UK) Project Manager and Lead Circus Tutor/Trainer.

Julien Ariza (from France, and living in Yangon),

Ko Pho Ke – our long-time friend and colleague who has made the project function over the past 4 years. Only able to join us for a few workshops (see below).

Jean-Noel Walkowiak (from France, and living in Yangon) also supported us as an advisor.



Our regular delivery team

Consists of Jules Howarth, Ko Than Htut and Ko Thaw Zin. Ko Pho Ke joined us when possible. Julien Ariza joined us for one-off workshops and generally supported and promoted our activities. He organised the International Social Circus Day event in 2019.

Accommodation

3 different places to stay found via AirBnB (paid for) and two sessions staying for free at the apartments of Julien Ariza and Jean-Noel Walkowiak. Big thanks are due to Julien and Jean-Noel! Their help saved us hundreds of dollars in rental costs. It still meant moving 4 times over 9 weeks.

Key data

Duration of project: 11 weeks
Workshops delivered (regular): 46, (one-offs): 3 = 49
Workshop duration time (hours): 87
Travel time – inc. collection/return of props (hours): 95
Total Individual engagements: 1332
Regular repeat engagements: 1148
One-off workshop event engagements: 184
Weekly regular workshops per week: average 104 per week
Highest weekly total: 130
Lowest weekly total: 55
Working pattern: 4 to 5 days a week



Whom we work with

We worked with previous partners from 2017-18:

Mary Chapman School for the Deaf, Ahlon.
Eden Centre for Disabled Children, Insein.
Parami Monastery School, South Dagon.
Yadana/S4SK, Mingaladon.

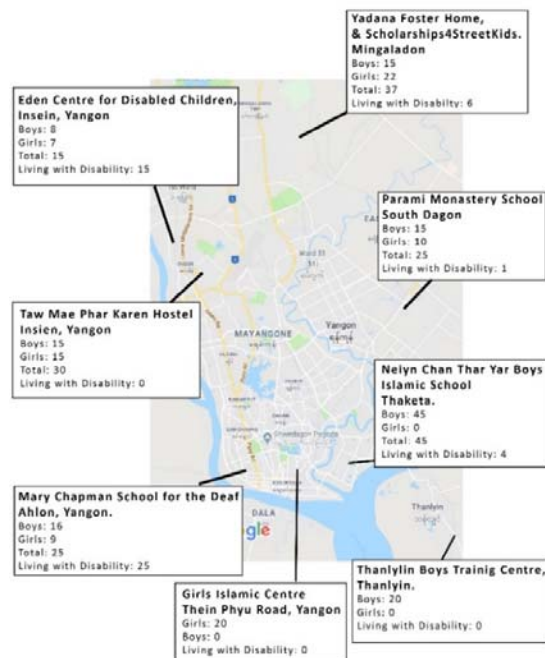
And we added two new partners:

Nyein Chan Thar Yar Islamic School, Thaketa.
Girls Islamic Centre, Thein Phyu Road.

We were unable to work with previous partners -
Thanlyin Boys Training Centre, Thanlyin and
Taung Thu Gone Karen Hostel, Insein.

Thanlyin Boys Training Centre. The headmaster had changed and we tried to arrange a meeting twice but the new Headmaster cancelled the meetings.

Taung Thu Gone Karen Hostel, Insein. They were too preoccupied with exams (due in February) and decided that they didn't have time for their students to do circus workshops.



Information, changes, updates

Our dear friend and colleague Ko Pho Ke became very unwell with a heart condition and was unable to work with us. He came to a few workshops with us – to Parami Monastery School, as this was a place he found for us to work at. But in general Ko Pho Ke needed to look after his health and won't be an active colleague ongoing. Thanks and respect are due to Ko Pho Ke for all his support and work over the last five years. We remain in contact.



We started working with Ko Thaw Zin – a professional taxi driver – who drove us to workshops and has become a trainee circus tutor. He and Ko Than Htut delivered the main part of workshops and Jules stepped-back, monitoring the quality of the work, supporting, and taking photos and videos. Jules trained Ko Than Htut and Ko Thaw Zin to improve their workshop delivery.

We are developing a pattern of Myanmar people leading the project, with support from the 'foreigner' Jules. Ko Than Htut and Ko Thaw Zin delivered three weeks of workshops on their own, after Jules left in early March. Progress is being made towards a Myanmar-person led delivery.

We applied to the PISCCA fund offered by the French Embassy in January. This fund offered support for 'civil society' initiatives. We made a proposal that included SCM working with Third Story Project (Yangon-based children's book publisher) to use circus as an engagement tool and work with Third Story books and story-tellers. We were unsuccessful; PISCCA in Myanmar had 140 applications we found out.

There was a major funding call-out by the European Union for funding for civil-society projects in Myanmar in January. This led to several European organisation rushing to Yangon to research funding partners. A Minority Right Group (MRG) (UK based) official came to Yangon along with an advisor, Sabine Choucair (Clown Me In, Lebanon). We met with them and outlined what we did and put them in contact with possible partners – Sonne Organisation, Smile Education Foundation and others. They made an application to the EU, we still don't know if it worked out. Sabine joined us for a workshop.



Ongoing challenges

Schedule

There are always challenges with our offering of circus workshops in regard to the priorities set by the schools and organisations we work with.

After the wet-season which ends usually by November, we get the highest number of participants until late December when certain schools/organisations have 'christmas breaks'. Then in mid to late January we find certain schools/orgs focus on the annual February examinations and drop the circus activities. So our ability to deliver circus workshops is curtailed.

Some of the groups we work with close their schools after exams and the children return home to the regions.

Storage of equipment

During this season Julien Ariza arranged with the Burbrit Taproom (Brewery) in Ahlon to store our equipment as he was running a private circus class there. This worked pretty well, but is not a long-term option. Thanks go to Julien and Burbrit for helping us out. It was a reasonable central location to work from.

Import of props/equipment

We are still trying to find a way to import props from Europe without having to pay heavy and randomly imposed import taxes.

Registering as a Not for Profit company in Myanmar

We continued to try to register SCM as a not-for-profit organisation or an NGO as they call it in Myanmar. Ko Than Htut led the process, gathering documents and going to relevant offices; we were not successful as the process is challenging and the rules keep being changed by the state. Ko Than Htut worked hard to make progress and credit to him for his determination and efforts.

Comments

We operate on a shoe-string budget and are therefore unable to pay for a permanent storage option year-round, nor can we pay for high import taxes. The fact that we have not succeeded in registering as a not-for-profit company as yet means that it's not possible to raise funds in Myanmar from business or from international funding organisations operating in Myanmar. We are asking for advice in Myanmar and considering registering as a Company limited by guarantee – which, on paper, seems possible. We need to find a company registration solution/format that satisfies local and international funders and donors.

Testimonials from Partners

U Kyaw Oo – Director of Thanylin Boys Training Centre.

“The children seem to be really interested in these lessons and these games help their brain development. It improves their eye-hand coordination and makes them enthusiastic and happy... this game allows people from different countries to come together and exchange skills. It's great. Myanmar was the first country to play Chinlon. Similarly, juggling started in other countries. Actually, juggling and Chinlon share a lot of similarities; it's amazing”.



Taung Thu Gone, Karen Hostel, Insein, Reverent Dr. Mu Soe, Senior Pastor, Karen Baptist Church.

“Before this they had no other activities – they go to class, come back to the hostel and all they can do is read a book, they didn't have any activities or toys to play with. These activities are really needed and they are good for the children too... They are using their minds as well as their bodies... I believe this is really good for their mind development. These games are good for them. Playing freely makes them happy and seeing that makes me happy.”

Dan Roberts, Director at Red Nose Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia

One of the nice things about teaching circus is that it doesn't matter if you are teaching (wealthy kids) poor kids, kids of any gender, kids of any economic or religious background it's all the same; we all learn how to juggle in the same way and we all have fun the same way.

Zami Saung, Physiotherapist, Eden Centre for Disabled Children

“This kind of workshop is really helpful for our children... who have a strong desire to play sport and do fun activities. I believe it could be for pure enjoyment or to develop useful skills. It is such a great opportunity for them to feel the same as other children... It makes them value themselves”.





Financial Report

International colleagues/workers do not receive any fee for their work.

We do pay our Myanmar colleagues/workers.

The Project Manager's flights, visa, travel, accommodation, food and subsistence costs are covered.

We also paid for 10 lessons in Burmese language this season, to develop the ability to communicate.

The majority of the funds we generate go on project delivery costs.

Costs

Project Manager (Jules Howarth)

Flights: £683 (including visa run to Bangkok for half-a-day)

Insurance: £200

Visas: £85

Travel UK (coach, food): £62

Project Activity Delivery

Accommodation in Yangon for Project Manager: £361

Food and subsistence: £228

Lead Myanmar Trainer: £769

Trainee Tutor and transport: £ 696

Travel and meetings: £140

Office, admin, printing, misc.: £ 176

Communications (phone and data): £20

Making Props: £27

A full breakdown of costs is available on request. Receipts are maintained and available for inspection.

Summary: Total Costs in Yangon: £2,382
 Total Costs paid from UK: £ 1,398
 Total Costs: £ 3,780

Income

In-hand in Yangon from last season: USD 50

In bank from last season: £787

Earned income in Yangon this season: MMK 190,000

Crowd-funding this season: £1,556

Cash in UK bank: £825

Total Income: £ 3,349

Operating profit/loss this season: - £431

Funds are raised through Crowdfunding, donations on-line through our website, earned-income in Yangon (circus play at events and parties or for international schools).

We receive Crowdfunding and donations in USD, NZD, AUD, GBP and EUR all of which is converted in GBP and paid into an account run by Social Circus International (registered UK company, limited by guarantee - i.e. not-for-profit)

Social Circus International (SCI) funds the Social Circus Myanmar (SCM) project.

SCM withdraws cash from ATM in Yangon from the SCI account.

SCM Reports and prepares book-keeping to show to SCI to check that the funds have been spent correctly.

Note: Jules founded SCI and is a Director; he also runs the SCM project. This dual interest has been identified to SCI and SCM Boards.

SCM is based in Myanmar and is still in process of registering as a not-for-profit or local NGO. This process is almost in its third year and has not yet succeeded. SCM has a constitution and a board of 6 people and meets annually to review its work.

Because SCM is not registered legally as a company it cannot open a company bank account in Myanmar.

Jules Howarth controls SCM finances, prepares book-keeping and accounts, pays workers and costs.

Due to the fact that Crowdfunding income arrives after the project begins Jules is forced to use his own money to cover costs and then claim back the money. He has to pay for major costs - flights, insurance, Visas, UK travel, accommodation in Yangon with his own money.

Paper receipts are gathered in Yangon whenever possible; a day-book of all costs is kept and updated daily; all GBP payments are receipted; bank transactions details are provided. SCI checks and reviews SCM accounts. SCI Board Member Martin Goode acts as SCI Treasurer.

Paperwork is maintained and secured by Jules Howarth and is available for inspection.

End of report

Any questions please contact: info@socialcircusmyanmar.com

Our registered address is provided by Smile Education & Development Foundation and we operate in Myanmar under a memorandum of understanding with them.

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