“I couldn’t be more proud than that particular moment when I saw the rainbow flags on the Yangon River”
Ei Mon Han, Community Partners International

“I had a dream since I was in grade 7. I wanted to be in a choir where I can be out and proud as a gay boy. My dream came true yesterday at &PROUD. I am thankful to those who make the pride happen and promise I will contribute more to our community”
Hein Htet Zaw

“I, as an ally, am so delighted to see our LGBT folks are happily participating in the Boat Parade and the park. They deserve to enjoy their lives in this kind of safe environment and our government plays an important role by granting approval for this event. I thank to everyone who makes this happen.”
- May Thandar Thu
&PROUD believes that stories are a powerful way of changing beliefs and attitudes, and that every LGBTIQ person has a story that’s worth telling, that’s worth hearing and that’s worth sharing.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OUR PARTNERS

EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA
EMBASSY OF GERMANY
EMBASSY OF THE NETHERLANDS
EMBASSY OF SWEDEN
EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND
EMBASSY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
GOETHE INSTITUT
HEINRICH BOELL FOUNDATION
INSTITUT FRANCAIS
BRIDGE
IRIE DIGITAL
RICE COMMUNICATIONS
TAGU FILM
Ko Moe Aung, who has been the face of the festival since we started five years ago, receives a hero award for her community work - being a mother to many young LGBTIQs and leading the monthly Picnic.

Community performers at the park
2019 marks the fifth year of &PROUD’s activities and the year has brought another step-up in &PROUD’s impact and reach. We have started Myanmar’s first LGBTIQ boat parade and changed the name of the Yangon festival to Yangon Pride, which is now a 9-day festival in 4 locations around the city. Those include a continuation of the public festival at Thakin Mya Park and a new partnership with Goethe Institut. Yangon Pride had over 13,000 visitors this year and through our Accessibility project we were able to welcome People with Disabilities for the festival with a special viewing platform and sign language.

Another milestone has been the opening of &PROUD Studio in Sanchaung, Yangon. We now have a year-round home where we organise activities for and by the Yangon LGBTIQ community. These include the &PROUD Choir, English class, zumba and k-pop dance classes and film nights. The Studio was opened following the success of the monthly picnic that welcomes young LGBTIQ people in a safe and free space. In it’s first year, the studio had 53 activities and over 1300 visitors.

&PROUD Photo had its biggest edition yet in 2 different galleries in November and we have taken &PROUD On The Road to Shwe Nyaung, Pathein, Monywa and Shwebo.

The I and Q have been added to the LGBT alphabet we use and we’ve focussed particularly on intersex issues during Pride with a debate, films and a photo exhibition. Intersex issues are little known in Myanmar (and the world) and by focussing on intersex we want to become a more inclusive organisation and increase awareness.

Lastly, we have started a mental health project called Yin Pwint Yar with a weekly meetup and a chat service. The project gained extra relevenence after the suicide cases amongst the LGBTIQ community in June and the project will be one of the most important activities to expand in the next years.

All of &PROUD’s activities combined reached a total of 16,858 visitors and participants. The Yangon festival still represents our biggest activity in terms of numbers and impact. Held over two weekends the festival started off with 3 days at Thakhin Mya Park with performances, games, films, human library, drag olympics, photo exhibitions and other activities. The weekend drew 10,000 visitors - many
of them families who came to take a look and learn about the LGBTIQ community. The same weekend saw the very first LGBTIQ boat parade on the Yangon river with 600 participants, an event that drew media interest from around the globe.

We are particularly proud of the accessibility component of this year’s festival, which included a special viewing platform for visitors in a wheelchair and sign language translation.

Yangon Pride ended with a 3-day weekend at French Institute with a focus on film, debate and performances. We were able to screen 6 films from Myanmar, which included the premiere of A Blue Sky - the first film to be supported by the &PROUD Film & Photography Fund. Lastly, panel discussions were held on the topics of Intersex and transgender health, on LGBTIQ legal change, and on LGBTIQ refugees.

The media reach of this year’s festival was outstanding. As with last year’s “first public LGBT festival” this year’s “first pride parade” was a strong hook for both local and international media. In Myanmar the festival was widely covered in print, online and on TV - although state-owned tv networks pulled out at the last minute. Internationally two items by AFP and Reuters were picked up around the globe and appeared in most countries in the region; from Singapore to India.

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Even though I am a straight, I go to &PROUD festival every year to remind myself that at the end of the day, only love and self-acceptance matter. With its vibrant and fun atmosphere, &PROUD festival is an environment and a community where each and every one is true to and proud of their own identity. &PROUD stories teach me about love and resilience. I am looking forward to more.  
*Tin Htet Paing, Journalist*
Drag superstar from Thailand Pangina Heals performs at French Institute.

Students from the Yangon Deaf School teach the audience how to applaud in sign language.

The LGBTIQ Choir performs at the park.
# RESULTS IN NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Achieved in 2018</th>
<th>Planned for 2019</th>
<th>Achieved in 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated number of visitors / persons reached</strong></td>
<td>Over 11,000 in Yangon including both the Park and the French Institute Event. Around 150 for Lashio 175 for Pakokku 600 for Mandalay. 2,500 at IDAHOT 300 visitors at 6 picnics.</td>
<td>10,000 at the park 3,000 at Institut Francais 1200 in Mandalay 800 at On The Road 500 at IDAHOT 400 at &amp;PROUD Photo</td>
<td>10,000 at the Park 2,350 at Institut Francais 0 in Mandalay 850 in Lashio &amp; 190 in Pakokku 850 at IDAHOT 530 at &amp;PROUD photo 600 at River Pride boat parade 170 at &amp;PROUD at Goethe 1318 at &amp;PROUD Studio community Centre events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of 14,725 visitors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 15,900 people</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: around 16,858 people</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media reach</strong></td>
<td>Continued high social media engagement (more than 800,000 reach) Daily radio advertising and items on Mandalay FM and City FM Huge print and broadcast media reach (see attached media list)</td>
<td>400,000 people on social media TV and media reach of 2.5 million. We expect less international press, since last year’s event was billed as ‘Myanmar’s first ever pride event’.</td>
<td>Social media reach around 600,000 people. Articles in major publications in Asia, Europe and north America, after being picked up by Reuters and AFP, due to ‘First Pride Parade in Myanmar’ State television channels boycotted the press conference and festival, but items on smaller channels and online channels as well as radio advertising for 2 weeks. Estimated reach: 1.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of debates</strong></td>
<td>Speeches at the park and two debates/panels at French Institute (on coming out and on lesbian identity). 2 workshops at French Institute (on Film Making and on LGBT activism) One panel/debate in Mandalay</td>
<td>Speeches and Human Library at the Park 2 debates and 2 workshops at IFB 1 debate, speeches and Human Library in Mandalay Debate at every On The Road</td>
<td>2 debates at IFB (on legal change and on transgender and intersex health) and 2 workshops on the same topics, speeches at the park, and Human Library at the park &amp; IFB. 1 debate at Goethe about LGBTIQ refugees 0 debate/speeches in Mandalay 4 discussions at On the Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Achieved in 2018</td>
<td>Planned for 2019</td>
<td>Achieved in 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of screenings</td>
<td>4 days of screenings in Yangon, plus a programme of 3-4 shorts and 2 features at &amp;PROUD in the Park. 2 days of screenings in Mandalay and Lashio</td>
<td>3 days of screenings at the park, and 3 at the French Institute 2 days of screenings in Mandalay 2 college and 5 On The Road screenings Around 25 films in total</td>
<td>3 days of screenings at the park, and 3 at the French Institute 0 days of screenings in Mandalay 0 college screenings and 4 On The Road screenings in Monywa, Shwebo, Shwenyaung and Pathein. 24 films including 6 new films from Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film fund</td>
<td>No film fund</td>
<td>Support 4 projects in 2019, with a focus on Myanmar makers and fiction film</td>
<td>Supported 1 project in 2019 as the guidelines and procedures did not finish in time for the film festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;PROUD Photo and Art</td>
<td>3 exhibitions at Yangon Pride 1 photo exhibition at &amp;PROUD Photo 1 photo and 1 selfie contest</td>
<td>No results planned</td>
<td>4 photo exhibitions at Yangon Pride 2 photo exhibitions at &amp;PROUD photo 2 artists exhibited at &amp;PROUD Photo 1 photo and 1 selfie contest at &amp;PROUD Photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td>No community centre</td>
<td>Open community Centre in Sanchaung Continue the Choir Initiate (bi)weekly dance classes Enroll 2 interns in our new internship programme to encourage youth participation and capacity building. Support 2 LGBTIQ sports teams</td>
<td>Community Centre &amp;PROUD Studio is running Choir ran until after the festival. Zumba and K-pop classes bi-weekly 2 interns for the festival and 1 intern is now part-time staff with &amp;PROUD No sports groups came forward Monthly packing of 800 condom and lubricant packs for distribution Monthly picnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health &amp; Hotline</td>
<td>No mental health project</td>
<td>Initiate support hotline and chat and train at least 12 volunteers</td>
<td>Trained 6 volunteers Started weekly Support Group at &amp;PROUD Set up basic chat services via Facebook Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational delivery</td>
<td>Interim and final report delivered</td>
<td>Interim narrative and financial report by 31 March Final financial and narrative report by November 30</td>
<td>Due to organisational constraints the interim report was not finalised in time. The final report will be ready by November 30th.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Myanmar families are all smiles at Stiletto Run of the hugely popular Drag Olympics.

Film screening at French Institute

Kings 'n Queens community group arrives at the festival site with placards demanding LGBTIQ rights

“A The Pride is well organized and attracts members of all communities to give different and positive perspectives. The combination of the Pride, boat parade and edutainment is very important. Especially having youths communities in the events and creating a safe environment for them. The event engages with traditional society to change social norms.”

Tin Maung Htwe
BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

&PROUD was established in 2014 as a cultural platform for the LGBT community to come together but also to act as a magnifier for discussion and movements on LGBT rights in Myanmar. There are five objectives for the organisation:

• To help create a strong and diverse LGBTIQ community through offering a range of ways that the LGBTIQ population can come together, through the festival, monthly activities such as the picnic and choir, and events in Yangon and throughout the country. This will help to show Myanmar LGBTIQ people that they are part of a large and unified group.

• To foster wider debate around LGBTIQ issues, through cultural events, screenings of Myanmar and Asian LGBTIQ films and through photography and art exhibitions. These will take place at the main Yangon festival, in Mandalay and through special screenings of films in cities across Myanmar and in schools and colleges.

• The festival will create more media discussion of LGBTIQ issues through press outreach, interviews and film screenings for journalists. We will continue to offer speakers and subjects to maintain positive press coverage of LGBTIQ issues.

• To foster and support a group of young Myanmar LGBTIQ film-makers and photographers through our ‘Rainbow Reels’ film making workshops, who can develop film projects depicting LGBTIQ lives in Myanmar and by initiating a new film and photography fund that allows film makers and photographers to pitch their ideas. With the original content from Myanmar we aim to create positive young role models for the LGBTIQ community.

• Finally, by embedding discussion of issues around HIV, and provision of information about HIV prevention, into the festival programme (both in Yangon and on tour), the festival will contribute to increased knowledge of HIV in the community and understanding of HIV as one of the important issues affecting the LGBTIQ community in Myanmar.

TARGET AUDIENCES

The key target group for the &PROUD are the LGBTIQ community across different parts of Myanmar. We have equal focus on men and women, and the transgender population, who are more vulnerable to stigma and police action. Almost all our events and publicity are in Burmese language and all films subtitled in Burmese.

LGBT populations outside Yangon and of other ethnic groups are reached by special screenings organized through Colours Rainbow partner groups in different cities, including the Mandalay Festival and the On the Road screenings. Since this year we’ve had a specific focus on intersex and transgender people, particularly around the health issues that these two groups face and for which there is currently little support and knowledge in Myanmar.

Secondary beneficiaries include Myanmar people who are not LGBTIQ but who will learn more about LGBTIQ lives and rights. All festival activities are as open as possible to all people, and one of the great achievements of the Festival at Thakhin Mya Park has been the number of non-LGBTIQ people and families that visit the park.

For this year’s Yangon Pride we have worked to make the festival more accessible for People with Disabilities. We built a platform for visitors in a wheel chair and had sign language on stage at Thakhin Mya Park. A shuttle bus picked up people with disabilities and their families from 3 townships in Yangon and we are proud to be the first festival in Myanmar to work on accessibility and hope to inspire other festivals to do the same.
This year we conducted a sample survey of our guests at the French Institute Events. Around 120 audience members were interviewed with a short questionnaire. It’s important to note that these are only visitors at the French Institute, which has a different audience from Thakhin Mya Park. The Institute gets more community members and fewer non-LGBT people.

The majority of the audience was between the ages of 16 and 30, with a peak from 17 to 21 showing that the festival inherently attracts a young crowd. Youth tend to be more open to exploring and asserting their diverse experiences of gender and sexuality, and this is reflected in the attendees of the festival. The festival attendees have become noticeably younger in the previous 2 years.

The festival was equally attended by slightly more women than men, with 7% identifying as transgender or other. Sexual orientation of our visitors is very colourful - both literally and figuratively. Gay men represent the biggest group at 22.5%.

In terms of reasons for coming, participants identified the films and spending time with friends in high measures. However, nearly 70% of survey participants (across all ages) cited the desire to be in an LGBTIQ friendly environment. It is clear from this statistic (and from qualitative interviews) that the welcoming atmosphere created by &PROUD is often considered as important as the event itself.

60% of the festival are repeat visitors, but as we are growing we still manage to have 40% as first time visitors, especially in the younger age group. Out of all visitors 85% indicated they would definitely or most likely attend the next festival.

When asked about how they had heard about the festival, more than 51% indicated from Facebook, showing the importance of social media for reaching young LGBT people in Myanmar. Another 37% of people heard about the festival by word-of-mouth. This figure has risen compared to last year and shows that the festival is becoming more embedded within the community.
&PROUD IN THE PARK

This year we were able to secure permission again from the Yangon Regional Government to hold one part of the &PROUD Festival in Thakin Mya Park.

The event consisted of sports and games for visitors, three photo exhibitions, film screenings, speeches, and award ceremony and performances from community members as well as big name performers. The drag olympics returned – a fun sports competition, which received a lot of attention especially from the media - and we started a drag night, with 10 of Yangon’s most influential drag queens performing on stage. There were booths from partner organisations focussing on LGBTIQ rights and (sexual) health. Overall attendance at the park was 10,000 people.

We were able to reach many new young LGBTIQ people and people who are not LGBTIQ themselves and may have little understanding of the presence of LGBTIQ people in Myanmar or of the situation with regard to criminalisation or protection of the rights of the LGBTIQ community. Since we moved to the park last year our LGBTIQ audience has become noticeably younger, as more people feel welcome in the park. Part of that audience then also came to IFB the weekend after the park.

We believe the success of the park was due to a combination of headlining performers and fun activities in a free, accessible space downtown - combined with more serious topics in documentary films, the human library and the photo exhibition. Most of the general public came not knowing much about the LGBTIQ nature of the festival, and we believe that one of the biggest achievements of the park weekend was to draw in a large number of families that had a fun day during which they met our community and learned about LGBTIQ people. Next year we intend to do a survey to public in the park to understand better the impact has on the perceptions of non-LGBTIQ visitors.

We awarded 4 hero awards to people who have fought the hardest for the rights and acceptance of our community. The awards were handed out by our embassy partners on the opening night of the festival and allow us to put in the spotlight those who work tirelessly for our community.

ACCESSIBLE FESTIVAL

The festival initiated a process to become more accessible and inclusive for People with Disabilities (PWDs). With sign language interpretation on 2 days and a special viewing platform for people in wheelchairs and others who need to sit down we were the first festival in Myanmar to have special facilities for PWDs. Working with grassroots disability organisations, we set up a shuttle bus service to two areas of Yangon, with which families could come to the festival for free.

There were students from the deaf school throughout the festival, with sign language on stage, and a special human library session for the deaf students. There was furthermore a disabled group selling handicrafts at the festival.

And the viewing platform was used by lots of families with a disabled family member. Families of 3 generations visited the festival, and the feedback we received was that many people were emotional about being welcomed for the first time, and many wanted to stay longer when the last shuttle bus left.
It has been a dream to initiate a true Pride Parade in Yangon, and this year we took a small step in that direction with Myanmar’s (and Asia’s) first ever LGBTIQ River Pride Boat Parade.

The political situation in Myanmar is such that it is not possible to do a parade or demonstration on the street, and we therefore looked at different ways to start a parade. We decided on a boat parade, on three different boats that already have a license to carry groups on the river. The boats could fit a total of 600 participants and tickets were sold at low cost ahead of time. Additionally, some community groups were given free and discounted tickets (3000 kyat) to ensure that the event was open for everyone.

Packed with DJs, performers and rainbow coloured guests, the boats set sail on the Yangon River for a 2 hour cruise. During the ride we were accompanied by 15 small boats carrying our rainbow flags along the river, past containerships and through the port.

Although the parade wasn’t very visible from the city, due to the river’s size and the port, it was a big statement for the LGBTIQ community to be out and proud together celebrating the increasing space available for LGBTIQ culture. Additionally, the boat parade drew a lot of press, so images from the parade were popular on facebook and in the media.

In going forward, we need to ensure that the parade is an inclusive event. This year there were more foreigners than anticipated (even though the majority of the tickets had been earmarked for Myanmar nationals), and there is a risk that it can be seen as elitist or foreign. Next year we will work with grassroots organisations and invite them to decorate their own boat.

“It is a heart touching moment to see a rainbow flag flying along Yangon River and people’s eyes and heart filled with love and joy”

Yadanar (UNFPA Myanmar)
&PROUD AT FRENCH INSTITUTE

The French Institute (IFB) weekend is still an important part of the festival. The setting in a diplomatic compound allows us to screen films that would otherwise not get through the censorship office, and the enclosed venue gives privacy and security for our visitors. The IFB weekend is therefore noticeably more of a community event and visitors feel more comfortable to dress as they identify.

The weekend opened with 4 new film premieres from Myanmar. Three had been made under our Rainbow Reels programme and one has been supported by &PROUD Film Fund. A total of 24 films were screened at the festival, with 6 new films from Myanmar and the festival took care to ensure a balance between lesbian, gay and transgender films, as well as having our first intersex films during the festival. Five international film makers and actors (from India, Japan and the Philippines) were present at the festival for Q&A's and discussions.

Although the focus at IFB is on film, all of &PROUD’s activities are a mixture of art forms, and the LGBTIQ Choir, a local theatre group and international drag superstar Pangina Heals from Thailand were on stage at IFB.

We held another session for the ‘human library’ where trained volunteers tell their story to festival attendees. The human library is by now an important part of our festival, as it allows people to better understand the situation of LGBTIQ persons.

IFB went from a 4-day to a 3-day event this year, while the park received an additional day. The park has a high cost to set up and a high impact, so the extra day makes sense. While at French Institute, the thursday evening was always difficult to fill as it’s during the working week. We now have our festive opening night at IFB on Friday, which is better suitable. It does mean that our attendance at IFB went down from 3700 last year to 2350. This was a bit lower than anticipated and we will focus more on IFB attendance next year - possibly by switching around some dates.

“&PROUD team put tremendous effort in the event and I am so honored to participate in the history of my LGBT friends made today. I am so proud of the &PROUD team!” Phyu Thandar Lwin

Film screening at French Institute

Rainbow Reels film makers answer questions from the audience after the premiere of the films during the opening night.
WORKSHOPS & DEBATES

Throughout the festival we held 3 debates and 2 workshops with LGBTIQ activists.

We added Goethe Institut as a third venue where we held a special screening and debate on LGBTIQ refugees in partnership with UNHCR. We screened the film Mr Gay Syria which tells the story of Syrian LGBTIQ refugees in Turkey, which was followed up by a panel including UNHCR, the Karen Human Rights Group and as a highlight a gay Karen man who shared his experiences growing up gay in the camps in Thailand. The debate showed the importance of thinking about services and information for non-Burmese populations around Myanmar’s borders.

The Goethe venue is very suitable for debates and screenings. We had 170 visitors for the special screening and debate.

At IFB we held a debate and workshop on intersex issues and transgender health. The festival added IQ (intersex and queer) to the LGBT alphabet this year and therefore had a special focus on creating awareness around intersex people, about whom there is little understanding in Myanmar. We did so with two film screenings, one photo exhibition and intersex activists from Taiwan and the UK who visited the festival for the debates. During the discussion on transgender health, we reviewed the status of knowledge and health services for transgender men and women in Myanmar. Many transgender people are using hormones to transition but with no medical support. In addition transgender people are at much higher risk of HIV than other members of the LGBTIQ community. The workshop was supported by Myanmar transgender activists and transgender doctor from Bangkok, and participants were health workers and trans activists from across Myanmar.

Lastly, there was a workshop and debate on legal change. For the workshop and debate we invited activist lawyers from Japan (specializing on legal rights for LGBTIQs) and India (from the successful anti-377 campaign which has resulted in the decriminalisation of same sex relations in India). We looked at best practices and discussed a strategy to campaign for LGBTIQ rights in Myanmar with Myanmar lawyers and advocacy organisation. We intend to take forward this strategy with a particular campaign this year.

Arvind, an LGBTIQ rights activist from India, discusses strategies to end section 377.

“Thanks so much for the hard work and superb organization. I was really happy to be there and saw the beginning of something important.. The fact that you had so many participants locally and the pride had an increasingly public face means that there is increasing progress. It was inspiring to see the energy and passion of the participants.”

Arvind Narrain (LGBTIQ Rights Activist and Lawyer, India)

“As a health service provider for trans community and a member of a trans community myself, coming here as a panel speaker I have learnt a lot from other panelists, participants and local trans community. It was a real privilege to have been part of the event this year.”

Kritima Samitpol (Medical Director, Tangerine Clinic for transgender people, Bangkok)
&PROUD ON THE ROAD

&PROUD On The Road had four editions this year:
• Shwenyaung - Nov 10-11 (226 visitors)
• Pathein - Nov 24-25 (220 visitors)
• Shwebo - March 23-24 (190 visitors)
• Monywa - April 27-28 (220 visitors)

On The Road brings us to small cities and towns where we organise mini film festivals. Typically there is a screening of some short films from Myanmar and a feature film each day, as well as having a discussion on LGBTIQ issues and several performances by local performance groups. The festivals allow us to reach new groups outside Yangon - particularly people who have not come into contact with LGBTIQ film from Myanmar. On The Road is always organised together with a local LGBTIQ community organisation, helping &PROUD to set up a network of nationwide partner organisations and to be more aware of what’s happening outside the Yangon Bubble. **In the upcoming election year we want to work with our local partner organisations to initiate a campaign to end section 377.**

&PROUD MANDALAY AND DAWEI

&PROUD Mandalay was planned in March 2019, but due to the exam-period for secondary schools, followed by the exams for high schools, we were advised to change the dates for Mandalay. We then planned Mandalay in October, but neither the shopping mall in Mandalay was available at that time nor the Jefferson Center (our previous host). Moreover the organisation faced budget constraints at the end of the financial year and had limited resources for Mandalay. The financial narrative discusses the budget constraints in details, but in the end it was regrettably decided to not go to Mandalay in the current project period.

In December &PROUD planned our largest On The Road to date at the main shopping mall in Dawei. It would be a 2 day event with film screenings and a stage for local performances. Unfortunately the permission for the event was withdrawn the day before the festival was due to start. Due to a security problem at another event in Dawei, the local government decided to cancel all events in Thanintary Region. The withdrawal of the permission was thus not an anti-LGBT issue, but the festival did incur costs for travelling to Dawei and making downpayments. We were meant to go back in April, but at that time there were still security concerns with the government.
One of our main achievements in 2019 was the opening of our community centre in Sanchaung. It marks the first time that &PROUD has a home, and we’ve set the open space up so that it can be used as a dance studio, training space and for film screenings. In addition part of the space is used as our office and for storing the festival materials we have gathered over the years. All the activities are free of charge to be as inclusive as possible.

The main activities in &PROUD studio are:

- Picnic - Monthly meetup in the park or the studio for young LGBTIQs to play games and have a chat. There were 12 picnics (425 attendants)
- Dance classes - Bi weekly Zumba or K-pop dance classes (218 attendants)
- Yin Pwint Yar support group (see below) - 12 meetups (74 attendants)
- Pratical English Club - weekly classes that started in September by an external LGBT organisation - 6 classes (120 attendants)
- LGBTIQ Choir - 6 rehearsals (114 attendants)
- One-off events such as music nights, film screenings, bingo night, beauty pageants and film auditions and film location (367 attendants)

Total attendance for studio activities was 1318. But more importantly the studio has started to become a home for the LGBTIQ community. More and more organisations and individuals know how to find us and have found the studio to be a safe space. For activities, but equally to hang out, talk with friends and meet new people. 1 external LGBT organisation is using the studio now for their own events and we want to grow this further so that the studio will be an incubator for community organisations.

It should be noted that attendance at some of our studio events has been lower than expected, even when the event is very popular on facebook beforehand. We are finding that there are still many people for whom it’s difficult to travel from afar in the city, and walking into an LGBT space for the first time might still be a big step for many. But we are positive that slowly more people will know about the Studio and as we are creating more partnerships with other organisations we’ll be able to draw new crowds to the space.
MENTAL HEALTH & THE LGBTIQ COMMUNITY

&PROUD planned to start a small mental health support group in 2019 with the aim of growing it into a hotline. In June, there were 4 suicides in the LGBTIQ community, and particularly the suicide of a librarian at Myanmar Imperial University hit hard in the community. The social media posts about bullying by co-workers that were shared online prior to the suicide were recognisable to many in the community. As the events unfolded we felt a strong need to come together and talk about the suicide and other issues, which was a strong case to push ahead with the support group.

At the moment, we have six trained volunteer councillors who run weekly support group meetings at &PROUD studio. They are supported by a licensed psychologist Aung Min hein, who was educated in Australia.

In addition to the weekly meetups, the volunteers provide a chatservice where people can contact a councillor via Facebook Messenger. These are replied to by one of the volunteers within 24 hours.

Around the time of the suicide case the support group drew around 18 participants per week, but this has since gone down to less than 5. We are finding a big hesitance from people to come and share their feelings in a group setting, and it might have to do with a lack of knowledge about the need to open up. The chat is working well however, and receives about 15 to 25 chat requests every week.

Together with the volunteers, which are very active, we are looking at strategies to reach more people with the weekly meetups. This can be by offering 1-on-1 counselling, by adding meditation and yoga, and by doing some art therapy.

At the same time we are planning a next training course for the volunteers to start the phone line and we are recruiting six new volunteers that will receive the basic training. The mental health support will be one of our key activities for 2020.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Reaching young people with information about sexual health and particularly HIV is one of the stated objectives of the festival. Figures from 2018 showed that levels of HIV among transgender and gay populations in Yangon and Mandalay are among the highest in Asia. We also asked about sexual health as part of our audience survey. We asked where people got their information from on these issues. The majority of respondents (see figure below) indicated this was done informally from friends and family as well as from the internet. It shows there is some distrust of the formal health sector in terms of discussing sexual health issues.

For that reason we developed a sexual health kit last year with condoms, lube and information about testing facilities to distribute at LGBTIQ events. We now have a group of 8 enthusiastic volunteers that runs this project and has been present at every FAB party and the events from &PROUD. The sexual health project runs together with TOP center (from PSI), that provides sexual health counselling and services for men who have sex with men. TOP center also provides the expertise for our project.

As in previous years, we have invited all NGOs working on sexual health to set up a booth at our festival. In 2019 we moved these booths from IFB to the park as the visitor numbers there are much higher. There was furthermore attention to HIV/AIDS issues in the film programme.

What's the most common way for you to find out information about sexual health related concerns?

- Internet 43%
- Informally consult with friends/family etc. 21%
- Other 12%
- No answer 11%
- Formally consult a doctor 13%
RAINBOW REELS

Rainbow Reels (RR) has been a key activity since the start of &PROUD. Under the programme we train a cohort of young queer people with film making skills to produce original content from Myanmar on the LGBTIQ community. RR is a joint programme of &PROUD and Colors Rainbow, and this year Colors Rainbow funded the trainings.

Last year we started with a brand new cohort of RR participants, and this year the 8 film makers made 2 new short films that will premiere during the upcoming film festival. In addition, RR alumni made 2 films this year that will also be screened at the festival.

In March we ran a new Myanmar LGBTIQ film night at Goethe, to show all the new films coming from Rainbow Reels workshops, and to vote on the favourite to be put forward for the Asia Pacific Queer Film Festival Alliance Award.

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY FUND

The &PROUD film fund was set up at the end of 2018 to support LGBTIQ film makers and photographers in Myanmar to produce new creative work on the community. The fund gives relatively small funding (from 500 to 5,000 usd) to creators as a stimulation to increase the quality of production. In the first year, three projects were supported

- A Blue Sky - this film short fiction film by Hein Htwe Maung was supported with 838 USD for the post production phase. It tells the story of two boys who fall in love at a boarding school.
- Burma Love - this photography project by Chiara Luxardo put LGBTIQ couples in traditional Burmese wedding dress to normalize images about LGBTIQ couples in a loving, long-term relationship. The photos were exhibited at Yangon Pride and Milan and featured in Vogue Italy. The fund supported 700 USD for studio rent and editing.
- The Letter from Love - this film by director Hnin Papa Soe was supported with 2,000 USD for the production of the film.

During 2019 we produced the draft guidelines for the film fund, but they have not been finalised yet due to organisational constraints. We therefore only disbursed half the funds planned for 2019 as we wait for the definite guidelines.
&PROUD PHOTO & ART

&PROUD photo had it’s biggest edition to date, with a 10 day exhibition in two galleries in Bogalay Zay street (Pansuriya and Myanm/art). The first exhibition was organised together with Pro Helvetia and featured Iranian photographer Laurence Rasti with her work "There are no homosexuals in Iran".

Concurrently we ran Singaporean photographer Grace Baey’s photo exhibition about the Myanmar transgender community, together with the best photos from the Selfie competition and this year’s photo competition. In addition, we exhibited two Myanmar artists (Thynn Lei Nwe and Richie Htet) this year who had illustrations on the queer community.

The 10-day exhibition drew in 530 people, was picked up in the local media, and with a focus on photos from Myanmar it served to start conversations about LGBTIQ rights.

WHAT ELSE DID WE DO?

• Our LGBT Choir sang at several events this year, including twice at Yangon Pride. The choir took a break during rainy season, but will be back for the upcoming pride.

• IDAHOT is celebrated globally on May 17th every year, and since last year &PROUD has been more actively involved in the organisation of IDAHOT. This year IDAHOT took place at Junction City and drew a large crowd of shoppers and visitors. We estimate that 850 people came in and engaged, but a multitude of that number saw a bit of the film screenings, pageants, performances and debates.

• The International Day for Transgender Remembrance was celebrated at &PROUD studio and had 62 visitors.

• &PROUD is an active member of the Asia Pacific Queer Film Festival Alliance and through the alliance Myanmar films are screened at film festivals around the region.
MEDIA COVERAGE

This year the festival partnered with Rice Communications, a PR company that worked pro-bono for the festival. The partnership meant a huge boost in the quality of press that the festival received, starting with the press conference that had more than 40 participants. Rice promoted the festival in their extensive network of journalists, and were furthermore present at the festival itself to guide journalists.

In addition, we hired a Myanmar journalist to support us with expertise on the Myanmar press and to be available throughout the festival for questions from journalists. In total, there were 48 broadcast and print publications about the festival, and 11 YouTube and social media stories. Rice communications valued the PR value of all these publications at 250,290 USD.

Similar to last year, when we celebrated ‘the first public pride event in Myanmar’, this year the international press picked up strongly on the ‘first LGBT pride parade in Myanmar’ story. Both AFP and Reuters had (video) stories on the wire, and these were picked up by news outlets from South America to Australia, and most ASEAN countries and India.

The one downside was on state television in Myanmar. Five channels had signed up for the press conference, but the evening before the press conference all five canceled. We strongly feel that this was guided by a higher up call from a ministry, banning the TV channels from reporting on the Pride. This has been a disappointment and shows that for all the positive changes there is still a long way to go.

Overall however we are very happy with the press coverage. There was also a lot more interest by new media publications that mostly post video on Facebook. These new online publications are increasingly popular in Myanmar and the videos receive a high view count.

We expect the total media reach to be around 1,5 million views. That also includes the 10 days of radio advertising we ran on Kiss FM and City FM.

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

Our social media reach has been a strength of the festival, particularly on Facebook. As of October the Facebook page has 70,889 likes and the reach of our posts often exceeds over 100,000 people. As the graph below shows, in the weeks around the festival our daily reach was often over 50,000 people, with peaks around 150,000 people per day.

Over the years, our expertise on Facebook promotion has grown, and so has our knowledge about paid advertising. It is therefore our preferred medium to reach out to the LGBTIQ community and the general public, and we frequently use Facebook to ask for feedback from our visitors.

Press conference at Goethe Institut

Daily Facebook reach during January-February
LESSONS LEARNED

• Like last year, the public festival at the park was a big success and has been influential in drawing in new visitors. It will continue to be most important part of Yangon Pride. Visitor numbers at IFB were lower than expected. We think that there are too many activities in a short timespan to draw a large number of visitors to all the events - especially now that we also added Goethe. For the coming year we will look at ways to spread the activities over a longer period of time.

• The boat parade was a good first start for a pride parade and we heard from many people that they were emotional at seeing the boats and the gay flags on the river for the first time. But the parade had a large number of expats (although ticket sales to non-Myanmar citizens had been limited) and we need to find ways to make it more of a community event. In the coming year we will have the boat parade during sunset (as opposed to the middle of day), which will be more pleasant. And we are suggesting to designate one or two boats for other LGBT community groups. They can decide on the decoration and DJ together and they will can fill the boat with their community members. We hope that this will give people more ownership of the parade and a feeling that it is really a community event.

• &PROUD Studio had 53 activities in the 10 months we’ve been open drawing in 1318 participants. We are very happy with these numbers, but also recognise that some of our events at the studio receive a lot of interest on facebook but get almost no participants. This means that there are still significant barriers to coming to the studio, and the range of people who regularly come to activities is still quite narrow. Our aim is to start opening the studio all day on Saturday and Sunday and to be more of an open house where people can come and hang out - as opposed to it being purely activity based. Furthermore, there have been fewer other community organisations using the studio for their own activities than we had hoped for. In the coming year we will seek to further embed the studio with those organisations. We will continue to strive for the studio to welcome people of all socio-economic backgrounds and will seek to make the barriers to come as low as possible.

• The Yin Pwint Yar support group had a quick and strong start, but needs a lot of energy and expertise to grow. We started shortly after the LGBT suicides became public in June. But after a busy start the attendance of the weekly support group has been low. There is definitely a hesitance with people to open up about their feelings in a group setting and culturally this is not in the norm. But we are also very certain that there is a need in the community to open up about issues of sexuality, acceptance in the family and workplace, gender, self-harm, self-confidence and suicidal thoughts. We notice this in the chatbox messages, and we will put a strong focus on growing the mental health programme. By trying different promotional messages and varying setups of the weekly support group. And by growing the chat service and adding a hotline.

• Working with a PR firm for the communication around the festival made a big difference in media impact due to the direct access to journalists they have. We will seek to have a pro-bono agreement with Rice communications again next year.

• Organisational delivery and sustainability has increased a lot since moving into an office, but we still have a few big steps to make in professionalisation. We are setting up more procedures and systems and now have 3 long-term staff members. At the same time, our reporting is still weak at times and we need to focus on stronger financial admin and reporting. Both registering officially as an NGO as well as engaging an external accounting firm were attempted at the beginning of the year, but stranded once the festivals rush started. We are fully committed to not make that mistake again in the coming year and are fully committed to register and engage with an accounting firm to develop stronger systems.
Yangon’s fiercest drag queens perform at the inauguration of Yangon Drag Night

The photo exhibitions at the park are very successful to raise awareness about LGBTIQ issues with the general public.

One of the boats from the first LGBTIQ River Pride Parade