LIST OF SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS

Introductory remarks
Professor Tim Lindsey
(Director of the Asian Law Centre and the Centre for Islamic Law and Society, Melbourne Law School, the University of Melbourne)

Opening speech

Transition and Prospects for the Future

Chris Lamb
(Former Ambassador to Burma)

Mr Christopher Lamb
Christopher Lamb was Special Adviser on International Relations for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) until he retired in June 2010. Before joining IFRC in 2000 he was an Australian diplomat for over 30 years. He served twice in Rangoon, from 1972-74 and again as Ambassador from 1986-89. At IFRC he was responsible for the diplomatic positioning of the IFRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the international community, including the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies as well as with major international non-governmental organisations and other entities. This included coordinating the development of IFRC positions in various humanitarian and political fields, supporting the work of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

As at DFAT, his work with IFRC had many close linkages to human rights issues, as well as international law and politics. His last position in DFAT Canberra was as Legal Adviser (1993-97) and before retiring from DFAT he was Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Romania and Macedonia. He served in many multilateral settings, often with a human rights emphasis, including the Australian Mission to the UN in New York. He was Australia’s Permanent Representative to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok (1984-86) before his posting to Rangoon. Since retiring from IFRC he has become Special Adviser to the Australian Red Cross, and has maintained his advisory function with IFRC. This entails advisings on a variety of political and legal issues, including support for National Societies to reinforce their independence and commitment to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
**Paper: Transporting Higher Education to Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border**

**Presenters:**

**Dr Susie Costello**  
(Senior lecturer in social work, RMIT University, Australia)  
Her background is in social work practice in diverse fields including health, disability, psychiatry, child protection and family support services. In 2007, Susie lived in Thailand near the border of Burma and worked with health and community workers in setting up a basic social work education program. She worked with UNICEF in Burma contributing to the University of Yangon's social work diploma and in developing the beginning of a child protection system. She teaches courses in social work practice, advocacy and culture. She can be contacted on susan.costello@rmit.edu.au.

**Thein Naing**  
(Chiang Mai University)  
He can be contacted at thein.naing@open.edu.au.  
TB Project Coordinator, OUA.is the Thai-Burma project coordinator of the Open Universities Australia online education programs for Burmese refugees. He holds degrees from three Australian universities, including a Bachelor of Applied Science and a Master of Education from RMIT University. His previous research was on Recognising diversity and leading for change: Multicultural education in Burma.

**Dr. Marie Joyce**  
(Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre, Australian Catholic University)  
She can be contacted at marie.joyce@acu.edu.au  
PhD is an Honorary Fellow at Australian Catholic University in Melbourne and a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society. She is an academic and clinical psychologist engaged in research in the Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre at ACU. She is a founding member of the Refugee Tertiary Education Committee and has visited the refugee camps and the student groups on the Thai-Burma border. She has published in the areas of clinical, educational and developmental psychology, as well as professional ethics, Australian literature and spirituality.

**Abstract:** Refugees from Burma on the Thailand border have few options for higher education. Many young people reluctantly leave their families and communities to resettle in other countries, including Australia, in order to gain tertiary qualifications. Resettlement to third countries has depleted the border of many young bright minds and leaders. Since 2003, the alternative of online and distance tertiary education has been provided for those who want to study in Thailand, close to their country and people. This presentation describes the processes of establishing and delivering scholarships for refugees on the border to study online at Australian universities. We explore the cross-cultural, inter-ethnic and pedagogical challenges inherent in the process. This work has begun a new movement in bringing academic resources to refugees in need of advanced education, transforming relationships across ethnic and international boundaries.

In addition to the three presenters, this research project involved Reverend Dr Michael Smith SJ Rector of Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne and the Dean of the Institute for Christian Spirituality and Pastoral Formation of the Melbourne College of Divinity, and Duncan MacLaren M.A. (Hons.), M.Th., the coordinator of the ACU programme to offer tertiary education to refugees on the Thai-Burma border.

One of the outcomes of this research project is the following chapter: Costello, S., Joyce, M., Smith, M., SJ, MacLaren, D. and Naing, T. (2011) Bridging ethnic, racial and geographical divides to bring higher education to refugees, in International Advances in Education: Global Initiatives for Equity and Social Justice Volume 2 – Ethnicity and Race (forthcoming 2011).
Paper: Contextualisation of INGO development approaches to Myanmar

Presenter:
Anthony Ware  
(PhD candidate and Lecturer, School of International and Political Studies, Deakin University; Lecturer, Master of Development Studies program, The University of Melbourne)  
He can be contacted at Anthony.ware@deakin.edu.au.

Abstract: Myanmar is a developing country with significant humanitarian need, including amongst other things, extreme poverty, health issues and educational deficiencies. Many International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) work inside Myanmar to help address these issues, but face pressures from all sides. The international community is concerned over human rights abuses and that the preconditions for development are not yet in place, while the domestic government is deeply suspicious of the motives of Western agencies and aid. The result for INGOs is restrictions on access, funding and mandates, creating a difficult and relatively unique context for INGO work.

This paper presents analysis of new primary research data collected on INGOs working inside Myanmar. In particular, it looks at the contextualisation of common international development approaches in order to attain the greatest effectiveness in this specific context. This research is based on in-depth interviews of forty-seven key informants from INGOs, UN organisations and local NGOs working within Myanmar. The key finding is that INGO’s believe that, with appropriate contextualisation, their effectiveness is not as heavily restricted in Myanmar as is commonly perceived, particularly in addressing the worst impact of extreme poverty in communities, but also in areas such as advocacy and capacity development of the emerging civil society.
**Paper:** *The social conscience of youth in Burma: contemporary Burmese Buddhism in practice*

**Presenter:**

**Mee Mee Zaw**
(PhD candidate, University of Western Australia)
She can be contacted at 20455899@student.uwa.edu.au

Mee Mee Zaw is a PhD candidate of Asian Studies, School of Social and Cultural Studies, University of Western Australia. She has a B.A (English) from Rangoon University (1983) and M.Ed (Curriculum and Instruction) from Assumption University, Bangkok (2002). She worked as a part-time tutor of the English Department of Rangoon University, Burma from 1984 to 1988, and a full-time lecturer at Assumption University, Bangkok from 1989 to 2008 until she moved with her family to Perth. She taught basic, intermediate and upper intermediate English focusing on reading and writing for 23 years. As part of professional development and for her master’s degree, she did research on factors influencing learning English at upper intermediate level. Currently, she is conducting research for her thesis entitled, “Teaching the youth Dhamma: new approaches in Myanmar”. She published a peer-reviewed article, “A youth-friendly approach to teaching Dhamma in contemporary urban Burma” as conference proceedings of 18th Biennial conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia (December 2010). She presented papers at Asian Studies seminars and Postgraduate conference of the Social and Cultural Studies of University of Western Australia. She did volunteer work for Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre in Perth and Adult Migrant English Program of the Central Institute of technology, where she also works as a note taker for Student Support. Her research interests include sociology of religion, urban anthropology, Buddhism, youth, volunteerism, Burma studies and cultural studies related to Southeast Asia.

**Abstract:** Traditionally young people in Burma have been involved in Buddhist social activities in their local communities. The last two decades has seen a significant increase in their participation in socio-religious activities, which parallels the growing social engagement of reformist Buddhist monks. In May 2008, the destructive Cyclone Nagis carried the social conscience of youth in Burma to new heights. There was an outpouring of voluntary involvement in relief and rehabilitation work. My argument in this paper is that the heightened social conscience of youth in Burma is related to the social engagement of contemporary Burmese Buddhism, which has become more focused on the practice of the social aspects of Buddhism.

The analysis is based on data collected through fieldwork conducted in mid-2009 and early 2011 in Yangon. This paper discusses the factors contributing to the heightened social conscience of youth in Burma in the context of urban young Buddhists taking part in Buddhist ethics training courses, charity work, relief and welfare work. For all the participants, the most significant factor influencing their social welfare (*parahita*) work is their volition (*cetana*). Their words and practices indicate that they believe in the Buddhist doctrine of *kamma* (*karma*), and appreciate the social engagement of Buddhist monks. In conclusion, social welfare work is a common ground shared by youth, religious groups, civil society groups and political groups. Despite the limited socio-political space in contemporary Burma, such work has potential as a means to achieve the respective goals of diverse groups.
Paper: Buddhist scientism in 1950s Burma (TBC)

Presenter:
Jordan Winfield  
(PhD candidate and Lecturer, Asia Institute and the Department of History, the University of Melbourne)  
He can be contacted at winfield_jordan@hotmail.com.

Abstract:
For much of the twentieth century, and up to the present, religion in Burma has been seen as undergoing little or no change since the last Burmese dynasty (17** - 1886). A narrative of traditionalistic resistance and revival as a response to modernity has dominated the understanding of colonial and postcolonial Burma and events in modern day Burma continue to be interpreted through the lens of precolonial kingship. Fortunately, there is a growing area of Burma scholarship that questions this idea of religious and cultural inertia, considering the ways in which Buddhism has changed over the last 150 years and the ways in which this change has affected concepts like legitimacy, state-society relations, epistemology and education in Burma.

My own presentation can conceivably be located within this general area of research. My focus is on the parliamentary period from 1948 - 1962; a time that is usually characterised as a period of Buddhist ‘revival,’ with the idea that precolonial ideas were restored rather than reinterpreted. In contrast, I assert that there was an elite-driven movement to reform Buddhist orthopraxis in response to the changing perspectives and priorities that accompanied Burma’s exposure to the new global modernity. The Burmese literati, often using English as the medium of expression, attempted to inculcate a progressive rationalist Buddhist legitimacy for the state and its programs while at the same time asserting the superiority of Burma’s religious tradition over others through its congruity with the most modern of ideologies.

To gain a perspective on some of the ways in which Buddhism was reinterpreted, as well as the ideas and ideologies to which it was equated, my presentation will look at one particular newspaper, the Rangoon Guardian, which was published for most of the 1950s and continued to be published for some time after the coup in 1962. Published in English, this newspaper included many letters and editorials that were illustrative of the way Buddhism had come to be equated with such notions as science, socialism and democratic. These letters were also critical of perceived deviations from the new orthodoxy on the part of the government led by U Nu. As such, this newspaper serves as example of one way in which the supposedly immutable Buddhist religion was undergoing change and reform.

This presentation includes material from the second chapter of my doctoral thesis, which considers Buddhist state building in colonial and postcolonial Burma.
Paper: *The influence of Burmese Buddhism on the promotion and protection of human rights in Burma*

Presenter:  
**Myint Myint San**  
(Southeastern Region Migrant Resource Centre)  
Myint Myint San was a final year botany student at Rangoon University in 1988 who was active in organising demonstrations and providing local administration during the height of the ‘Second Independence’ movement also known as ‘8.8.88 Uprising’. She fled to the Thai-Burma border in September 1988. In 1993, she won a scholarship to Australia and completed an undergraduate degree in Political Science at Monash University. From 1999 to 2008, she worked and volunteered with different organisations in Thailand in the areas of education and training on gender issue, peace building, conflict management, human rights and HIV/AIDS education. In 2009, she gained her M.A. in International Human Rights with Mahidol University, Salaya, Thailand. She can be contacted at myint@sermrc.org.au.

Abstract: This paper analyses the impact of Burmese Buddhism on political and social thinking in Burma. The paper studies how popular forms of Burmese Buddhism influence understandings of human rights. In particular, it makes reference to the impact of the Burmese form of Buddhism on gender equality and individual freedoms regarding sexual orientation.

In the process of Burmanising Buddhism, the concept of Karma has been downgraded and reinterpreted into an apology, explanation or rationalisation for the poor economic and political situation in the country. The explanation and rationalisation of Karma is that no one can change the cause of Karma; and that one just has to take life as it comes. As long as Burmese Buddhism adheres to a Burmanised form of Karmic concept, the equality of humans will not be understood and the realisation of human rights in Burma will still be elusive. This paper argues that the general public’s understanding of human rights has been reduced because of the way in which Buddhism has been interpreted in Burma.
**Paper:** The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the promotion of democracy in Myanmar: (hard) lessons from the other regions of the world

**Presenter:**
Catherine Renshaw  
(PhD candidate, Faculty of Law, University of Sydney)  
The subject of her dissertation is ‘The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights: Legitimacy and Potential.’ Catherine is also a Visiting Fellow in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales. Between 2008 and 2010, she was Director of a three-year research project funded by the Australian Research Council and based in the Australian Human Rights Centre at the University of New South Wales. She is admitted to practice as a solicitor in the Supreme Court of New South Wales and the High Court of Australia and has worked in private practice, as well as in the Civil Law Section of the Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales, where she specialised in anti-discrimination law. From 1997 until 2007 she held taught law at the University of Newcastle. She can be contacted at catherine.renshaw@unsw.edu.au.

**Abstract:** Throughout the course of its forty-year history, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has maintained a diverse political membership. With the exception of Brunei Darussalam (an absolute monarchy with an unelected Legislative Council), all ASEAN states currently define themselves as ‘democracies.’ These democracies, however, are of very different hues. The authorities in Myanmar, for example, describe the political practice of that state as “discipline-flourishing democracy.”

In 2008, ASEAN states signed the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which explicitly links the purpose of ASEAN with the strengthening of democracy and the protection of human rights. The Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), established in 2009, refer to the promotion of “the principles of democracy and constitutional government” as well as to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This paper examines how ‘democracy’ is understood in the ASEAN region and how the AICHR might exercise its mandate to promote democracy. I argue that the experience of the world’s other regional human rights institutions (in the Americas, Europe and Africa), suggests that there are limits to the ability of regional institutions to promote democracy in states such as Myanmar.
**Paper:** The emotional wellbeing of women from Burma living in Australia

**Presenter:**

Meagan Wilson  
(PhD candidate, Health Sciences (Refugee Mental Health), Monash University)  
She is one of twenty successful Australian postgraduate recipients of the 2011 round of the Prime Minister’s Australia Asia Awards. As part of her Award, Meagan will travel to Thailand to undertake research at Khon Kaen University. Meagan’s research will focus on Burmese refugee mental health. Meagan is a member of the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health and the International Association for Cross Cultural Psychology. She also volunteers at Adult Migration Education Services (AMES). She can be contacted at Meagan.wilson@monash.edu.au.

**Abstract:** The number of people from Burma re-settling in Australia has risen considerably in recent years; this group is the largest group of refugees to be granted offshore visas to Australia under the Humanitarian Program in 2009-2010. ‘Push factors’ such as civil conflict and human rights abuses committed by the Burmese military dictatorship, the State Peace Development Council, are likely to continue to drive people out of Burma. Little is known about how this emerging population copes emotionally with the social and political injustices they have faced in Burma while managing the various stresses associated with separation and resettlement.

The broad aim of this study is to explore the emotional wellbeing of migrant women from Burma living in Australia and the means by which these women cope with resettlement, using a holistic framework that draws on the fields of psychology and anthropology. More specifically, it will consider how ‘Burmese Australian’ women conceptualise mental health. This will involve investigating how factors such as culture, religion, politics and society influence perceptions of mental health, the means by which these women cope emotionally, and their needs in terms of re-settlement support.

This multi-site ethnographic study will initially involve 6 months of fieldwork (commencing in 2011) with migrant women from Burma who are living in Thailand. This will provide valuable contextual information about transitional conditions in which ‘Australian Burmese’ migrants have lived. A subsequent 12 months fieldwork (commencing in 2012) will be conducted with ‘Australian Burmese’ women who are living in Melbourne. Study methods include in-depth interviews, participant observation, photovoice and focus groups. Use of a multidisciplinary qualitative framework in this exploratory study will lead to a more in-depth understanding of the culturally specific emotional needs of the emerging Burma community in the Australian context.
**Paper: Refugee experiences of settling in Australia: Perspectives of people from Burma**

**Presenter:**

**Melissa Crouch**
(PhD candidate, Asian Law Centre and the Centre for the Study of Islamic Law, Melbourne Law School, the University of Melbourne)

Melissa is a Principal Research Assistant at the Asian Law Centre and Editing Assistant of the *Australian Journal of Asian Law*. Melissa’s doctoral research is supported by an ARC Federation Fellowship doctoral scholarship and an Endeavour Australia Award. Melissa has published several articles, including in the *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, the *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, *Asian Studies Review* and the *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*. She can be contacted at m.crouch@unimelb.edu.au.

**Abstract:** This presentation is based on the recent research conducted in partnership with the Southeastern Region Migrant Resource Centre (MRC). The model for this research was based on two previous projects conducted by the MRC on the Sudanese and Afghan refugee community in Southeast Melbourne. Approximately 30 people were interviewed from a broad cross-section of the community of people from Burma living in Melbourne. This presentation will begin by discussing the method and design of this research. It will then analyses the general findings of this project as set out in the recent publication ‘People of Burma in Melbourne: perspectives of a refugee community’, which is designed as a resource for community service providers. She will then outline plans to take a more theoretical and analytical approach to the data collected in this project.
**Paper:** *Foreign investment in Myanmar: development prospects of the recent windfall*

**Presenter:**
Jared Bissinger  
(PhD candidate, Department of Economics, Macquarie University)

His research focuses on economic development in Myanmar, and the role that international actors, including corporations, governments, and international organisations, play in influencing the country’s development. Jared previously worked as a research fellow at the National Bureau of Asian Research, and has held internships with the US Department of State, the United Nations Development Program, and the Australian Institute of International Affairs. He can be contacted at jared.bissinger@mq.edu.au.

**Abstract:** In the last year, Myanmar has received foreign investment commitments of over $19 billion, an astronomically high figure for a country that has brought in just under $8 billion in investment over the previous two decades. This, as well as Aung San Suu Kyi’s recorded address to Davos (World Economic Forum) calling for cautious investments in infrastructure and technology, has brought renewed attention to Myanmar’s underdeveloped yet resource-rich economy. At the same time, Myanmar’s albeit rigged elections have prompted significant debate in the EU and elsewhere about the efficacy and merit of continued sanctions on investment and trade, while ASEAN and some organisations, including the ICG have called for their immediate removal.

This paper examines recent developments in foreign investment, and their potential to contribute to the country’s development. The first part of the paper will review recent investment commitments, including sectors, amounts, and specific projects, as well as their origins and potential economic and political motivations. I will put these new commitments in historical context and compare them with actual investment inflows to see if these developments evidence a larger change in Myanmar’s approach to its economy.

The paper will then examine how foreign investment contributes to, or sometimes challenges economic development. The paper will draw on theoretical and historical evidence to show the disparate impacts of investments in different sectors, and argue that many of the recently announced investments in Myanmar are concentrated in sectors that rarely benefit economic development in countries with weak governance. The paper will conclude with a brief mention of the ongoing challenges in Myanmar’s investment climate, as well as rumoured new laws that could affect investment.
Paper: Taking stock of the Myanmar economy (TBC)

Presenter:
Khin Maung Nyo
(Chief Editor, World Economic Journal; Chief Editor, Khitlunge Myanmar News Online Journal)
Khin Maung Nyo is a Central Executive Committee Member of Myanmar Writers and Journalist’s Association and works as a freelance columnist for local publications in Myanmar. He can be contacted at kmaungnyo@gmail.com.

Abstract: This paper takes account of the latest developments and challenges dominating Myanmar markets since 1988, including the commodity market, service market, labour market, capital market, real estate market, foreign exchange market and the information market. This analysis is based on personal observations and local resources such as print media and online media.

The military government officially adopted a market-oriented economic policy when it abandoned state Socialism in the early 1990s. No one knows, however, exactly what Burma’s market-oriented economy really is. Generally, the dominant trait of the economy is inflation, as a result of the government’s monetisation scheme to address the budget deficit. Fixed income earners like pensioners and many salaried workers suffer daily from high inflation. Competition policies and the rule of law may pave the way for a level playing-field for all in the market. Some form of market-friendly government intervention is necessary for adopting standards and quality control. Because of the monopolistic nature of markets, firms that are service-minded and consumer-oriented are in short supply. The paper concluded that Myanmar markets are still in their infancy and require serious reforms.
Paper: Changes in Burmese Phonology and Orthography

Presenter:  
Professor David Bradley  
(La Trobe University)

Abstract: Burmese has been written since the 1113 AD quadrilingual Rajkumar inscription at the Myazedi in Pagan. Like many languages with such a long written history, the orthography is extremely conservative and reflects earlier pronunciation. There were some early graphic reforms, such as the replacement of medial 'l' with 'r' or 'y', and a series of very minor changes since the late 19th century, such as the elimination of final 'w' after the digraph 'u' + 'i' representing modern /o/, and in the late 20th century some changes to the treatment of final 'n', and of 'bh' where it represents /ph/.

Using data from early Chinese sources, 17th century Italian Jesuit materials, early 19th century materials by English speakers and modern dialects, we can trace some of the phonological changes over the last nine centuries. Some additional changes are currently in progress, such as a merger of /u'/ (graphic 'wat' and 'wap') to /i'/ and of /un/ (graphic 'wan' and 'wam') to /in/, and a merger of aspirated /sh/ to unaspirated /s/.

One major problem for learners of Burmese is the conservatism of the orthography. For mother tongue speakers, spelling is arbitrary, though once one knows how spell a word, it is almost always obvious how to pronounce it. For foreign learners, the best strategy is to shift as quickly as possible to the Burmese orthography rather than a transcription so as to avoid a similar problem.

The difficulty for foreign learners is compounded by the absence of a standard transcription for Burmese. Cornyn and related sources use one, early materials by Okell use another, more recent materials by Okell use another, Bernot uses yet another, and the Myanmar Language Commission has its own too. It would be highly desirable if one standard transcription could be agreed upon and used worldwide.

Presenter:
Stephen Morey
(Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, La Trobe University)
Stephen Morey has researched various Tai and Tibeto-Burman languages in North East India since 1996, writing descriptive grammars of the Tai languages and the Turung variety of Singpho. He has also worked on the historical sources of the indigenous languages of Victoria. He can be contacted at s.morey@latrobe.edu.au.

Abstract: The communities grouped together as Tangsa (in India) and Tangshang (in Myanmar) have lived in the Patkai range between India and Myanmar since time immemorial. Research on both sides of the border suggests that there are about 70 groups, or subtribes, each speaking their own variety of language. Some of these varieties are very similar and can be treated as dialects, but some are so unintelligible as to be effectively different languages.

For generations, Tangsa people have been moving from the Myanmar side to the India side. The most recent arrivals in India are there termed Pangwa and there are some linguistic and cultural features that bind the Pangwa together as distinct from the non-Pangwa. One of these are the traditional songs, deeply rooted in traditional animistic practices such as sacrifice and spirit-calling. Older people report that the ‘song language’ of the different Pangwa groups was intelligible by all, even if the spoken language is not.

On the Myanmar side, a big majority of Tangsa (Tangshang) are now Christian, mostly Baptist. On the India side, however, most Pangwa have converted to Christianity since the 1970s, though there are still some following animist traditions, but the non-Pangwa Tangsa are mostly either Buddhists or followers of a recently codified faith, Rang Fraa, based on animist principles, but adopting many features of Protestant Christianity.

Many, perhaps most, of the Tangsa regard themselves as part of a larger ‘Naga’ identity. However, this is not accepted by all, particularly by some of the non-Christian Tangsa. Based on fieldwork collected from several field trips to Tangsa communities in India who have come from Myanmar in recent years, and still have active links with Myanmar, and with reference to work done in Myanmar, this talk will examine the issues of language, song, religion and identity.
Title: The Gun and The Mirror: Repression, Human Rights and Filmmaking

Presenter:
Carmela Baranowska
(Lecturer in Media, Australian Catholic University)

Carmela Baranowska’s thesis “The Gun and The Mirror: Repression, Human Rights and Filmmaking” is a personal account of her own journey and development as a documentary filmmaker. She has been working on human rights for over twenty years as both a filmmaker and a journalist. Her main areas of focus continue to be East Timor, Afghanistan and Burma.

Abstract:
The recent Arab Spring has witnessed the fall of dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt; and the destabilisation of regimes in Libya, Yemen and Syria. In contrast, Burma’s Saffron Revolution of 2007 was unsuccessful.

This presentation will explore the role of new media technologies in promoting an end to military rule. Now with the most popular online platforms, youtube and twitter, human rights abuses can be relayed the instant they occur; and in some instances, they are streamed live and as they are taking place. While the internet is not an end in itself, it functions as a means to an end: it acts as a tool to empower political change.

This paper will investigate a number of inter-related questions. At a time when former regimes are democratising why is Burma still a military dictatorship? What was the role of new media technology, especially mobile forms of journalism (small, hand-held video cameras) and satellite TV in Burma’s 2007 Saffron Revolution? Here, I will examine two examples: the role of the citizen journalists from the Democratic Voice of Burma’s and their two major documentary contributions: Burma VJ and the Orphans of Cyclone Nargis.

In the span of nearly twenty years, between Burma’s uprisings of 1988 and 2007 there occurred a tremendous shift in the development of new media technologies. Unfortunately, it is only during a time of great crisis including Burma’s 2007 Uprising and the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Nargis, that Burma’s pro-democracy activists can fully develop new media communication strategies – and audiences.

Unlike North Africa, internet penetration and connectivity is not deep in Burma. I will argue that as internet speed, breadth and depth develops in Burma there will be more opportunities for many-to-many messages to be received and distributed. Some future human rights strategies could see the development of a Kenyan inspired Ushahidi or crisis mapping platform, although this would have to be tempered by the extreme censorship of Burma’s military regime.