



Filmmakers from The Kohima Institute: Our Changing the Story journey

I'm Keduo and with my colleagues Achabu and Benrilo I've been on an exciting journey for the last few months thanks to the visionary Changing the Story project and The Kohima Institute. We are all from Nagaland, a beautiful, mountainous state, which has had its fair share of political and economic problems over the last 70 years or so. There has been conflict, which affected our parents and grandparents' generations in obvious ways, such as violence, loss of life, displacement, and insecurity. Although things are more or less peaceful now, the conflict has affected our generation in less direct ways, such as mental health problems, drink and drug problems and economic struggles.

In our work for CTS, we wanted to explore the social problems arising in our state in the post-conflict period. After much thought, each of us selected a topic: Achabu chose mental health, Benrilo chose substance abuse, and I chose unemployment. To find subjects to interview, we liaised with some of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that are doing great work in Nagaland. We built relationships with the different organizations and carried out research to find the best subjects to interview for our topics.

The challenge ahead was to make a 15-minute documentary on our topic but we were complete novices. How were we to meet this challenge and produce films that would meet the Changing the Story quality mark?

Dr Ato Richa came to the rescue by agreeing to train us at his Richa Production House. This involved sleepless nights for all of us because Dr Ato's schedule meant we had to work at night. I'll admit it was tough but I'm pleased to say that we completed the course. Dr Richa taught us basic use of the camera, the different angles of shooting and about the various kinds of video editing software. It was a steep learning curve – but exciting.

Our training finished in mid-September, by which time we were confident enough to go out to the field to shoot our documentaries. Thanks to our work with the Civil Society Organisations in Nagaland, we had already identified suitable interviewees. The challenges we faced in finding interviewees varied between the three filmmakers according to the sensitivity of the subjects we had chosen. Achabu interviewed four Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and 11 subjects, Ben interviewed 2 CSOs and 5 subjects and Keduo interviewed 3 CSOs and 10 subjects.

Most of the shooting took place in Kohima and Dimapur and by the end of September; the young filmmakers had enough footage to make a documentary video. Editing started in the beginning of October and was complete in first week of November.

Inevitably, we faced numerous challenges during shooting. Nagaland is home to many different communities with multiple languages and sometimes the communication gap meant the filmmakers had to take an interpreter with them. On other occasions, circumstances meant the filmmaker had to change the script on the spot; or the subjects did not give their attention to the camera. We even found some people expected something in return from us. The weather was a problem; we were in the monsoon and heavy rain sometimes meant we could not go out for shooting and had to postpone the date. Sometimes we faced rejection while trying to interview subjects on sensitive topics like mental health so we had to adapt and shoot according to the subject's comfort zone.

However, overall we learnt so many things while shooting. We learnt that there must be a plan B if things do not turn out as planned; we learnt how to build rapport and how to interview people, and discovered a lot about the activities of many new organizations engaging



Keduokuolie Pienü presents the rough cut of his film "Strive for Survival." Credit Michael Heneise

youths in different fields, which we will be highlighting in the films we make.

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