

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026
17th anniversary reflection



Docskool
Documentary Open School

docskool.org.np

1. Our Theory of Change

How Docskool makes change possible!

Our Mission

Docskool is a network of filmmakers and visual media producers. Our work bridges key skill gaps while encouraging the formation of cultural frameworks essential to free, uninterrupted practice of cinema and visual media in Nepal. Docskool's work caters to mid-career filmmakers and grassroots media producers whose work is not limited to cinema.

Our Vision

Docskool envisions people to have access to explore and to practice film people regardless of background, ethnicity, without the fear of being controlled, monitored, questioned. A situation where cinema plays an active role in advancing social justice.

Our Aim

To build cultural frameworks necessary to least resourced filmmakers, artists to produce and showcase their work.

Build collective recognition of indigenous, native narratives as pivotal to development of visual media capable to impact social justice.

To provide visual media skills to young changemakers

2. Thematic Priorities and brief history of our work

2.1 Build media infrastructures to whom it matters most

Between 2010 – 2018 Docskool's **Possibility Initiative** formed a strategic alliance with Radio Udayapur in eastern Nepal to form a community media hub. A room with 5 computers, a sound booth for audio experiments were put together. It brought young people together as they further hosted open mic events at the weekly Haat (bazaar) and a mobile library bridging gap between existing media spaces and young people.

The **Clinik.Kathmandu** Script Lab designed by Docskool in 2014 is South Asia's first locally born project development program for debutante filmmakers. Between 2014 – 2019 the Clinik program helped build 80 fiction and documentary projects from 9 countries. Many filmmakers promoted by the program have shown films at global platforms while speaking on topics close to them.

2.2 Expand the horizon of cinema's take on people and communities

Historically cinema has always been a medium of cultural imposition on communities pushed to the fringe. Docskool's research report on the **'representation of Women and Girls in Nepal's cinema'** in 2021 presents how women, girls and queer people have been disproportionately presented and as a result harmed by Nepal's cinema. The years following several initiatives by state and non-state actors have been hosted that promise to give better recognition to women as creative leads.

The **Queer film festival Kathmandu** (with its roots as private shows in 2011), was relaunched in 2024 as a celebration of the potential of diverse cinema. At its core, apart from bringing the queer community together it also advocates for end to all policing on cinema. The festival asks for filmmakers to be bolder in their depiction of sexuality.

2.3 Provide companionship to artists when in need

We realise bold cinema will continue to upset those who seek to control creative expression. With South Asia and the planet going through waves of fundamentalism – and desperate acts to control people's opinions, filmmakers more than ever are at risk. It further narrows the already compromised space for freedom to creative expression.

Docskool's Women and queer people in cinema initiative has since 2016 been offering year-long companionship support to select filmmakers who need partners to bring certain projects to life. The project has since expanded as the 'filmmakers at risk' support an urgent response to filmmakers who face political or cultural ridicule for the creative choices they make. We have since reached out to filmmakers during the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the crisis in Myanmar in 2022 and to young people during the unrest in Bangladesh, Manipur and in late 2025 in Nepal.

3. Our work in 2025

Our 17 th Anniversary was anything but an attempt to reimagine ourselves. It was a year to revisit our notebooks from 15 years in the past and to tell ourselves, it is never too late to do it again. And also a year to cross the conventional boundaries set for filmmakers/ artists to leap forth as campaigners to an ever pressing ecological injustice at hand today.

These are what get us going for the larger part:

3.1. Physical venues of the arts

In early 2009 we had no certain name. Few of us called it Harke Films, the other half were divided in referring to the then informal group as DOS – some of us found it too close to microsoft program we had all grown up forced to learn. In all those months however (most of 2009), we did have a screening room.

In Gaurighat at a two-storey garage house, Docskool's story had been written as nothing beyond our early inspirations to come together as film buffs, to watch and share films. Buying a projector was the first thing on the bucket list and we did that with much excitement.

In 2025, we have been adamant enough to tell ourselves that its about time the cinema screening room/ micro cinema/ picture house/ theater, comes back to life. But we have changed much in the last 15 years, so the cinema might be a little more than just the projector. Our priorities also want the room to be 100% eco friendly, meaning we avoid cement or any other non perishable materials in the construction. That the room be open, wide enough to fit at least 50 people and be useful enough for other acts of randomness when not screening films.

Project 1: Airavat Picture House

In January 5 th , 2026 Docskool launched the Airavat Picture house is a micro cinema dedicated to non mainstream film screenings in Kathmandu. The cinema follows Docskool's early aspirations to create an accessible screening venue for young filmmakers whose films don't qualify for theatrical exhibitions. It currently operates weekly and special shows along side the Cine-Saptaha program which programs number of Nepali shorts as a weeklong screening at the venue. Airavat Picture House also serves as the primary screening venue for the Queer Film Festival Kathmandu and Something Like a Film Festival – both of which focus on unique aspects of diversity in cinema.

- Key Facts

- x Airavat Picture House is the first micro-cinema in Nepal
- x The cinema is a member of Confederation of Arthouse Cinema's, Paris providing knowledge sharing with over 2500 + art house cinema's in Europe, and rest of the world.
- x Airavat is a non-profit, membership-based cinema

Key Info

Funding: Docskool Director's fund
Established: January 2026
Capacity: 40-seater cinema

Project 2: Ehwa Arts Collaboratory (Art Residency)

The Ehwa arts collaboratory setup in the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake is a regenerative farm and learning campus in Dhulikhel. Since its formation the collaboratory has hosted the Clinic.Kathmandu residential trainings for feature fiction and documentary project development. From 2025 the farm campus now is the main hub of learning and interaction for fellows joining the Green Media Fellowship. Ehwa art Collaboratory is one of two primary physical interaction venues of Docskool. It can now also be found listed on ResArtists.org global network of residencies, offering residency opportunity to artists to work from world over.

- Key Facts

- x Is open to group residencies and ecology trips
- x the farm neighbours the Kapilesware Community Forest, a large native forest with flora, fauna and managed by the community.

3.2. Young Creators and their Narratives

Docskool has insisted that young creators are at the heart of establishing diversity and variation in the visual arts. This also puts them at tremendous risk given the societal boundaries artists are expected to operate within. We design new efforts each year to reach out to pockets of young people as means to expand their skills/ networks and to ensure young makers are free to create materials as they deem fit.

This year we have envisioned focussing on young environment defenders who often put themselves at risk working on issues of environment. These are also the people who are at the forefront of documenting, and generating evidentiary knowledge of the rapidly changing ecological patterns in recent times. We also know that investing in young people with media skills is possibly the best way to ensure sustainable media documentation, and knowledge management at grassroots initiatives.

Project 1: Green Media Fellowship

Docskool introduced an 8-month visual media fellowship for young environment defenders this year. The program brings together 10 young participants as fellows whose work sets them apart as keen observers of their environments. The fellowship is open primarily to young people of indigenous identities between 18 – 25 years of age.

The 2025 fellowship was held from the Ehwa Arts Collaboratory farm campus as the residential training venue alongside 12 community level initiatives joining as knowledge exchange partners. By the end of the fellowship participants take home professional knowledge on visual media (film, photography) and personal experiences of different environment action work happening across Nepal. The 2025 program also ended with the completion of 10 key environment themed films produced by the fellows.

Partners of GMF 2025

Partners of GMF 2025
Bird Conservation Nepal,
Vision Organisation Nepal,
Association of Community Seed Banks,
WOREC Udayapur,
Jhumlabang Village Foundation,
National Trust for Nature Conservation,
Abari,
Finnish Church Aid,
Chepang Samaj Nepal,
Libird,
Green Hub Assam (India)

Key Data

Funding: Docskool director's Fund

Fiscal Contributors: Human Rights Tattoo, Finnish Church Aid

Budget: 15,000 USD

Project 2: Exchange Fellows

The 2025 program also hosted a fellowship exchange with the Green Hub program, a similar environment media fellowship held from Assam for young people across India's North East states. 4 fellows from the program joined the Green Media Fellowship as full-time participants, graduating with the Diploma in Community Creative Media provided by Docskool at end of the course.

3.3. Cinema with Diversity

Our cinema diversity initiatives take us closer to filmmakers often working in the fringe, with limited resources at times putting their lives at risk. Our ongoing efforts offering companionship to filmmakers brings audiences through screenings and dialogues on diversity.

Project 1: Queer Film Festival Kathmandu (2 nd Edition)

The second season of Queer Film Festival Kathmandu was held as a 10-day celebration of cinema diversity held between 15 - 24 th of January 2026. The showcased 170 films from all continents with stories that underline personal experiences, contemporary queer identity, sexuality, personal choices and bodily integrity among others. These included 23 fiction documentaries and 150 shorts, as films were packaged into 9 categories.

The festival brought together filmmakers, queer campaigners, culture workers from different disciplines at screenings and various dialogues held during the 10 days. QFK '26 was held at the Airavat Picture House, making it the first festival held at the venue alongside screenings at Blue Diamond Society and Alliance Francaise Kathmandu. Over 2000 visitors visited the festival.

Seminars/ Dialogues held at the 2026 Queer Film Festival Kathmandu's

- Drawing Parallels between the Feminist and Queer movement
- Queer lens in cinema and film appreciation (held with the Film Critics Society Nepal)
- Experience sharing on the presentation of LGBT people in Nepal's cinema
- Censorship of film festivals, a step towards further infringing creative expression

Key Info

Funders: Movies that Matter

Budget supported: 5,000 Euros

Project Partners: Blue Diamond Society, Trans Men Initiative, LOOM.

4. New Alliances

Through participation at the ArtHouse Cinema Training in Berlin in August, 2025, Docskool has joined the list of 2500+ art house cinema's across Europe in the alliance formed by **Confederation of Art House Cinema's in Europe (CICAE)**. The alliance presents opportunities to share screenings of pivotal films from Europe to the Airavat Pictutre House cinema screen in Kathmandu.

Docskool is now a partner residency of **ResArtist.org**. Resartist the largest network of art residencies in the world.

5. Docskool Organisational Status

Docskool is a NGO working under alliance with Social Welfare Council of Nepal. Docskool has been registered with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Dhulikhel Municipality. Docskool is a tax free certified non profit.

6. Board Members

Kshitiz Adhiraj (Founder Chairperson)

Kshitiz is a filmmaker, photographer whose work focuses on political Documentaries. His upcoming film 'Comrade Sharma and Me' is a periodic documentary on Nepal's political transition between 2010 – 2023.

Pashupati Rai (Vice Chairperson)

Pashupati is one of Nepal's most prolific female actors. Projects she has led have been to several film festivals. She is a Theater director and actor where she also trains younger actors.

Mahesh Shrestha (General Secretary)

Mahesh is a visual media campaigner. He started his cinema journey with Docskool at the founding workshop in 2008. He works closely with development projects as a communications strategist.

Ajay Gautam (Treasurer)

Ajay Gautam is an entrepreneur and a former rock band member. His new project, 'Humble Nepal ', produces bamboo-based products.

Shreejana Bhandari (Member)

Shreejana is a finance consultant providing services to several projects across Nepal.

Ranju Danuwar (Member)

Ranju is a community media journalist based out of Udayapur. She is the chair of the Indigenous Journalists Federation (Udayapur), and has been a radio producer since 2008.

Shail Shrestha (Member)

Shail is an ecological justice campaigner. He works with young people to promote a holistic understanding of climate impacts. He is interested in sustainable futures with a focus on indigenous knowledge, skill.

Snippets From 2011 - 2026

Clinik.Kathmandu Project Lab, DocLab



*Nepal Cine Symposium 2011,
(Young Asian Film Market)*



Clinik.Kathmandu Project Lab 2014



Clinik.Kathmandu Project Lab 2015



Clinik.Kathmandu Group of 2015



*North East India Filmmaker interactions,
2016 (Clinik.Kathmandu extension activity)*



Clinik Documentary Workshop 2018



Clinik.Kathmandu DocLab 2019



Filmmaker Rawyan Shayema at IFFR, 2020

Something Like a Film Festival - 2023 (Out of Kathmandu editions)

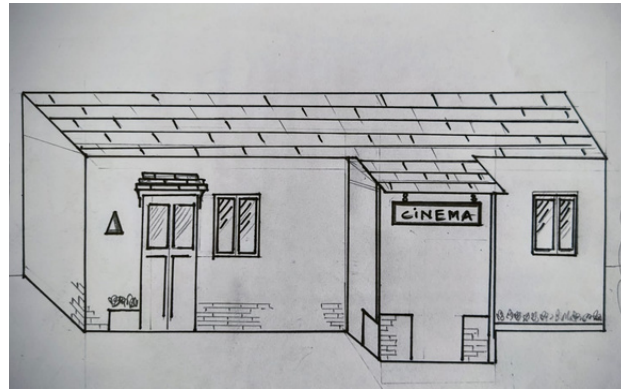


SLFF - Dhangadhi



Photos from the year

Airavat Picture House



rough sketch of the final building



Construction as traditional mud structure



Inaguration of Airavat Picture House



The Picture House upon completion

Queer Film Festival-2026



Film Festival . Kathmandu



Film Festival Kathmandu

Conversation
12:00 pm | 17 January



Drawing parallels between the queer & feminist movement

*Umisha Pandey & Anu in conversation
with Jyotsna Maskay*

*Followed by film screening of **Beyond the Blues** (63' India)
& interaction with the Director, Debalina Majumder*

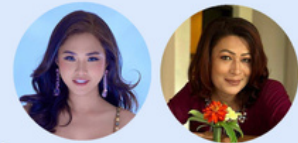
Venue: Blue Diamond Society, Dhumbarahi



co-organiser



Interaction
11:00 am | 16 January



Experience sharing: Playing LGBT characters in Nepali films

Speakers:

Bhumika Shrestha

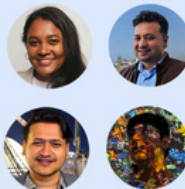
Angel Lama

Queer Rights Campaigners and Actor

*Followed by film screening of **Warm Film** (90' Serbia)*



Workshop @ QFK
9:00 am | 18 January



Film Appreciation and Queer Lens in cinema

*Abhimanyu Dixit, Rajeela Shrestha, Birat
Bijay Ojha & Ankit Khadgi*

*Followed by film screening of **Into the Moonlight** (63' Indonesia)
Venue: Airavat Picture House, Thapathali*



collaborator



Open Interaction
23 Jan. 3:30 pm



Censorship of Film Festivals - *profoundly fundamentalist take on Nepal's existing control over creative expression in cinema.*

Moderator

Reena Moktan (Film Critic, Journalist)

Speakers

Dikshya Khadgi (Human Rights Lawyer, Campaigner)

Saroj Sapkota (Film Programmer, Festival Organiser)

Samipya Timal (Film Critic Society Nepal)

Pranay Shakya (Filmmaker, Kaleidoscope Production)

Happening Today

Venue: Airavat Picture House, Thapathali



Queer Film Festival Kathmandu 2026



Queer Film Festival at Airavat Picture House



Filmmaker interaction at the festival

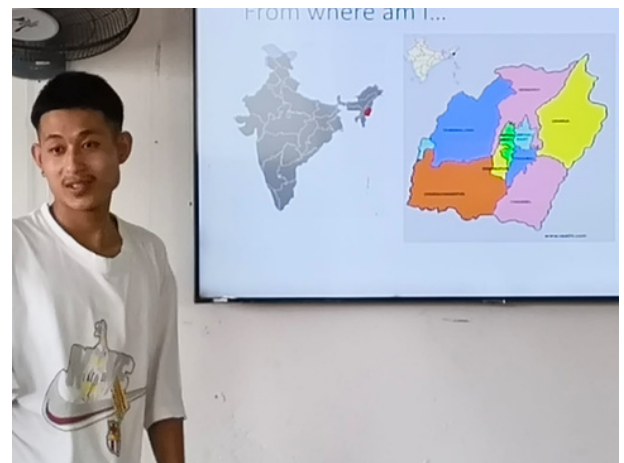


Interaction: LGBTQIA+ in Nepal's Cinema



Closing night of QFK '26

Green Media Fellowship 2025



Exchange fellow introduces North East India



Online session with Prof. Abhi Subedi



Sexuality session with Jyotsna Maskay



GMF-Fellows in East-Rukum



Fellows upon reception at Bhume, Rukum (E)



GMF Fellows in Udayapur



GMF-Session on Environment by Shail Shrestha



Green Media Fellowship Batch-2025

7.2 Other Happenings



filmmaker Surbhi Dewan receives the Freedom filmmaker recognition in person



Docskool Partners



Festival del film Locarno
Open Doors

NFDC
cinemas of india



CINEMART

HONG KONG - ASIA FILM FINANCING FORUM
HAF
香港亞洲電影投資會

 International
HK Film Festival

green hub
Youth Fellowship & Video for Change

MIDPOINT
INSTITUTE

Docedge
Asian Forum for
Documentary
Kolkata

doclab
asian platform for documentary project market

MEDIACORP

fiaf

 **movies
that
matter**