The Skater (Photo by Shumi, Bangladesh)

IMPACT REPORT 2017
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Foreword

Dear Supporters,

Thank you for taking the time to read our Impact Report, which seeks to capture the impact of our programmes and advocacy work. We hope you find it an inspiring read, and that it will make you think of ways we can work together to transform lives of women and girls across the world.

“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together” – African proverb. This left an imprint on me when I came across it on International Women’s Day in 2013, leading to the launch of Lensational.

At this time four years ago, Lensational was in its infancy and I was piloting our work in Hong Kong with domestic workers and in Pakistan with adolescent girls. Our participants have all enjoyed the photography training and were able to share their stories, for the first time, with the wider world. Yet it was apparent to me that we have to take research and impact measurement very seriously to learn what works and to improve our programmes, as well as to deliver long-term impact to these communities. Four years of hard work led by our dedicated team of volunteers are summarized in this report.

There are a lot of stories in this report, which I hope you will enjoy, but for me, an overarching theme is resilience. No matter where they are from, whatever hardships they have been through, these women and girls all have an unyielding desire to tell their own stories. Lensational serves as a window for these stories to be heard on a global level. Resilience has also been part of our organisational learning – growing Lensational has not been an easy journey. But our team of 100 members are inspired every day by the resilience of our Lensational photographers, and we keep learning and going.

I want to thank especially all of our Programme Managers for their work with our women and girls; our Impact Coordinator, Annie Osborne; and our Head of Research, Louisa Barker, for leading on this report. We would love your questions, advice and ideas. Please write to us at info@lensational.org.

Thank you again for your support to our work to empower women and girls through photography, and we can’t wait to share more of our progress in the coming years.

Best regards,

Bonnie Chiu
Founder and CEO, Lensational
Executive Summary

Lensational is a non-profit social enterprise that aims to empower women emotionally and economically by recycling cameras, conducting photography training and equipping women with cameras for income generation through photography sales. Since launching in 2013, our programmes have reached over 600 women across 15 programme locations such as Pakistan, Thailand, Russia, and Kenya. Lensational’s impact can be divided into three categories: emotional empowerment, economic empowerment, and advocacy.

**Emotional empowerment impact**
Our testimonials and the focus groups ¹ we conducted with programme participants have highlighted the emotional and therapeutic impact of our work. Our preliminary findings have shown that participants feel greater self-confidence and pride after having received training with us. Further, participants have felt that their ability to express themselves and share their own feelings have accrued with photography training. Finally, many of our programme participants have developed and maintained a social network and friendships after the workshops, lowering feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are common in the communities we work with.

**Economic empowerment impact**
Lensational has sold more than £3,000 of photographs since our launch. 50% of each sale goes directly to the photographer and 50% is re-invested in Lensational to further programme work and continuous support. We have plans to scale sales significantly in

¹ To date, Lensational has run two in depth focus groups. Going forward, wherever possible focus groups will follow every programme.
order to increase the economic empowerment of our photographers. We have secured strong corporate partners such as Getty Images, Affordable Art Fair, Standard Chartered and a global beverage company in order to do so. By 2018, Lensational aims to reach a 50-50 funding model between grants and earned income. We have also developed on-demand modules in stock photography, videography, photography services such as wedding photography, journalism, and entrepreneurship, so women participants can continue learning new skills with us as they grow their own portfolio.

**Advocacy impact**
Our third impact is in the form of advocacy. Through engaging with a wide array of stakeholders on our social media platforms, in the press, and during events and conferences, we raise awareness of the issues faced by the women we work with and challenge gender and cultural stereotypes. Since launching in 2013, Lensational’s social media platforms have grown substantially to total over 14,500 fans across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Medium. Our posts have reached a total audience of over 1 million, and engaged over 25,000. Our work has been featured in respected news outlets worldwide such as *The Guardian*, *ABC News*, and *Huffington Post*. Lensational volunteers have spoken about the organisation at 30 events in 10 countries, and over 4,000 people have seen our students’ photographs at exhibitions across the globe.
Introduction

In this report we aim to communicate Lensational’s impact by providing an overview of the photography trainings Lensational has delivered over the last 4 years in 15 countries; sharing a selection of the stories of the women and girls that have participated in our workshops; and presenting the organization’s advocacy work preliminary channelled through exhibitions, the press and social media.

At Lensational, we place the utmost importance on ensuring that our programme development is based upon participant feedback and learning from our impact analysis. As a relatively young social enterprise, we previously measured our impact in terms of outputs (e.g. number of workshops and participants) as well as by collecting qualitative data and testimonials from a selection our participants. As of this year, Lensational programme managers have begun to systematically collect data through pre- and post-workshop participant surveys as well as focus groups to provide more in-depth data and enable the organization to measure impact at the outcome level. Lensational has also developed a results monitoring framework, centered on emotional and economic empowerment.

In terms of organizational advocacy, our communications team provides analytics into the number of people we reach through our exhibitions, social media accounts, and press coverage.

The report will begin by providing a description of the organization and an overview of our results to date. We will then provide more detailed accounts of our programmes and advocacy work.
How We Work

Lensational’s Mission
Lensational is a non-profit social enterprise that aims to empower women *emotionally* and *economically* by recycling cameras, conducting photography training and equipping women with cameras for income generation through photography sales.

The Lensational Model
1) Collecting cameras and smartphones: collecting second-hand digital cameras and smartphones from individuals and corporates.

2) Photography and digital training: Lensational conducts photography and digital training for marginalised women in partnership with local partners. Lensational has published a manual that guides trainers in the 8-hour standard training, which covers basic camera techniques, emotional expression and storytelling. To scale the training further, we have developed a more vocational wedding photography module and are in the process of developing a mobile photography module.

3) Photography sales and services: Photos taken by our participants are then sold through our online platform, exhibitions and corporate sales partners, which include Getty Images and EyeEm. 50% of revenue goes back to the participants; 50% goes back to Lensational. These photos, shared in the media, also challenge stereotypes of women, and in particular, women from developing countries.

4) Continuous training: Once the basic training is complete, participants can choose to receive mentoring and ongoing training from professional photographers represented by Getty Images and Magnum Foundation via Lensational.

Why Photography?
*At Lensational, we are convinced of the potential of photography in driving social change, including addressing gender inequalities.*

As a communicative tool, photography allows women to document the circumstances they live in, share their stories, develop creative and communicative skills, and work towards making independent choices for themselves.

We train and mentor our students in their own communities to use photography to share their personal narratives, empowering them to reflect upon their circumstances and to participate in their visual representation. In a highly visualised and fast-paced world, we want to make the best use of the impact of imagery and the power of storytelling. Our starting point is to make sure that the stories of women who might otherwise be voiceless are heard and seen, and that they are told from the women’s
very own perspective.

*We allow for a social exploration that, we believe, no other medium can transmit as powerfully as photography.*

Our mission goes far beyond the relatively short teaching experience. We follow the progress of our students, and we bring their work to the attention of audiences across the globe on our online photo platform and via exhibitions. Through this process, we aim to empower women in a long-lasting and sustainable manner.

Lensational’s media narrative challenges the stereotypes and social norms that a global audience often expects of migrants, refugees, domestic workers, and women in the developing world. The image of an empowered woman with a camera in her hand demonstrates the agency, curiosity, and creativity of women and girls in the developing world that is often ignored in dominant media narratives.

*There is a significant gap in the stock photography market that Lensational’s students can help to fill.*

The stock photo industry is worth $2.88 billion globally, yet three quarters of all suppliers are located in Europe; with only 6% residing in Asia, and 1% in Australia, Latin America and Africa².

*We also believe in the therapeutic power of photography.*

As with many artistic expressions, photography can enable people to cope with their hardships in a way they might not be able to express otherwise. Our community of photography students is continuously growing, and we believe in the power of inspiration by the work and stories of like-minded women, of women who share similar experiences, and who achieved to step out of their daily routines. And of course it’s fun! Posing in front of the camera, immortalising happy moments, reliving memories through watching pictures – the positive sentiments related to photography are as strong as its critical dimension.

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Impact Overview

Number of women trained: 604
Number of cameras collected: 200
Number of countries where we have held trainings: 15

Emotional empowerment
The testimonials and the focus groups\(^3\) that we have run with participants highlight the significant impact that Lensational workshops have on women and girls’ emotional empowerment. For example, preliminary findings show that the Lensational participants felt greater self-confidence in themselves and pride in their newly learned skills after the training. Further, a number of the participants have continued to take photographs and find that photography is an important means of self-expression. A key finding that we have seen across our programmes is the social network and friendships developed among the participants, many of which have been maintained over time. This can be particularly significant where individuals have low social capital, such as domestic workers, for example.

Economic empowerment
Lensational has sold more than £3,000 of photographs since our launch. We have plans to scale sales significantly in order to increasing the economic empowerment of our photographers. In the initial phase, we have been focusing on ensuring that our intended impact is achieved and have worked hard on securing strong corporate partners, including Getty Images, Affordable Art Fair, Standard Chartered and a global beverage company. Please see the ‘Next Steps’ section at the end of the report for a more detailed discussion of Lensational’s plans to scale photography sales.

Advocacy
Our third impact is in the form of advocacy. Through engaging with a wide array of stakeholders on our social media platforms, in the press, and during events and conferences, we raise awareness of the issues faced by the women we work with. Our participants are taught to express themselves through photography, and we make sure their authentic stories are heard, bringing them to the mainstream. Through the dissemination of our women’s photographs and stories in the media, we also ensure that gender and cultural stereotypes are challenged, and actively promote a transparent and ethical process of making and disseminating stock photography.

A story from our Pakistan programme illustrates this very well: Women and girls are rarely seen driving a motor-taxi in Pakistan. But, during one of the photography workshops, a girl posed on top of a motor-taxi. Her picture sends encouraging signs to

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\(^3\) To date, Lensational has run two in depth focus groups. Going forward, wherever possible focus groups will follow every programme.
others, and makes them think about empowerment - ultimately, we want this picture to be a model of standard for the stories we share globally.

The Lensational Team
Lensational is a volunteer-led organization. We have a diverse and creative team united by our common vision of empowering women through photography.

- Number of current Lensational volunteers: **100**
- Number of countries with a Lensational volunteer: **25**
- Average age of volunteers: **24**
- Number of volunteer hours logged since launch: **43,200**
- Number of teaching hours provided: **483.2**
Programme Vignettes

Hong Kong

300 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- May 2013 - Photography training course with two groups of domestic workers originating from Indonesia and the Philippines
- May 2014 - Advanced training on photo editing with 15 domestic workers from Indonesia and the Philippines
- August 2014 – Photography training with ten Pakistani girls aged 13-18 years old living in Hong Kong
- August 2015 - Photography training for eight refugee women in Hong Kong
- March 2016 – Launch of Lensational Academy

Context:
Global migration patterns are increasingly feminised. There are 9,900 asylum seekers, mostly from South Asia, in Hong Kong, as well as 320,000 women from Indonesia and the Philippines working as domestic helpers, representing one of the largest migrant groups in Southeast Asia. These women are largely isolated from other segments of society and their fragile status can result in inequalities and disempowerment. There is a need to give a voice to the domestic workers to tell their own stories.

Lensational’s approach:
Lensational has a strong presence in Hong Kong. Lensational aims to give a voice to women and girls who are isolated, economically disadvantaged, and far away from home through photography. Two participants in our May 2013 training, Asti Maria and Sina, were featured in Asia Calling, The South China Morning Post, and Digital Rev. In September 2015, six domestic worker participants shared what it meant to them to be migrant workers in The Guardian. Their work was also showcased in London as part of the exhibition “Transit in Doubt” and we held a public discussion introducing this work called “Reimagining Migration.” In August 2016, the Lensational Academy and our partner Para Site, a contemporary arts space in Hong Kong, hosted a photography exhibition of domestic workers’ photos called “Photographese.”

Testimonials:
A focus group with participants in a Hong Kong workshop demonstrated the emotional and economic impact that Lensational has had on the participants. Tara, a domestic worker, discussed how Lensational has decreased her feelings of loneliness and isolation in Hong Kong:

*We are in Hong Kong without family, sisters or brothers. We just want to have*
anyone who can support us and be nice and treat us like a family. Some days we are feeling lonely and unhappy but we cannot [talk about it]... we feel lonely, but to have something like this, to see other people like that, it makes us not feel lonely anymore.

Another participant explained how Lensational increased her agency to express her emotions and communicate about familial or societal issues with confidence:

Women expressing their feelings is important. Maybe the problems in the family or in society is something they can’t talk about, if they show them in their photos they can express their feelings. It helps express emotions.

Arumy, an Indonesian migrant worker, elaborated on how Lensational has built her confidence, opened her eyes to new entrepreneurial experiences, and expanded her opportunities:

Thanks to Lensational I now have developed a plan that I would otherwise have never thought of. I want to build a homestay and invite tourists to my beautiful village and show the world my village through the power of photography. I still have a lot to learn to take good photos, and I am keen to keep learning. I also want to build an education center in my village. Now I am again working in Singapore to make my plan come true soon. I already bought land, and the next step is to start working on the building.

Finally, Rona added that Lensational has taught her a skill that can provide economic security in the future:

You have the talent of photography, and you lose your job, and you can use it maybe to start your own job.

Featured photograph:

This photo is called Empowerment by Asti Maria. A group of Indonesian domestic workers jump in joy and anticipation to defy the stereotype of Muslim women in Hong Kong. Asti is 34 years old, and she has been in Hong Kong for 8 years. She is from Malang, East Java. She wants to start a photography-related business when she returns to Indonesia. In Hong Kong, she has been learning entrepreneurship (Mandiri Sahabatku) with Mandiri bank, an Indonesian bank, and she also takes entrepreneurship classes online.
Pakistan

120 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **September 2013** – Lensational trained 60 Pakistani students and teachers at non-formal schools, children in the slums, and children of sex workers in Lahore’s red light district
- **April 2015** – Lensational equipped participants with their own cameras to continue expressing themselves and earning income through selling photographs

Context:
Pakistan has the highest Not In Education and Employment (NEET) rate for women in South Asia (64.3%), compared to a male NEET rate of 9.3%. Our training programme seeks to empower women economically by giving them the flexibility to earn a supplementary income, as well as to challenge pervasive gender stereotypes.

Lensational’s approach:
Lensational partnered with the Citizens’ Commission for Human Development and the Sheed Society to provide training to women and girls in the marginalised communities of Pakistan. Lensational’s programme in Pakistan has been featured in both The Guardian and The Express Tribune, a major Pakistani daily newspaper.

Featured photograph:

This photograph, which inspired our other photography programmes – brings to life the mission of Lensational – to inspire and create new meanings for women and girls worldwide. In this photo, Rimsha shows her photography skills to a friend. Rimsha is 12 years old and comes from the Lahore district in Pakistan. She dreams of becoming a doctor when she is older, and wants to study hard to be able to achieve her dream. Rimsha was very enthusiastic during the Lensational workshop. She loved taking photographs of the world around her.
Bangladesh

78 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **2014 - 2015** – Trained 30 female garment workers in photography
- **February 2015** – Provided photography training to a group of eight girls learning how to surf in Cox’s Bazar, a tourist town on the coast of Bangladesh
- **2016** – Trained 35 garment workers in photography
- **2017** – In partnership with Nagorik Uddyog, trained children in video-journalism to help them document their stories, culminating in a short documentary Ami, Amar, Ma, shot entirely by the daughters of garment workers

Context:
In 2016 in Bangladesh, an estimated 6.4 million children aged 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour, while only 3 in 10 girls from low-income families will complete secondary school. The garment sector provides most employment opportunities for women in Bangladesh and is one of the only ways for rural, uneducated women to enter the formal workforce. In 2016, 80% of the garment industry’s employees were women. They are often underpaid and receive little recognition from their families and society.

Lensational approach:
With garment workers, our photography training aimed to build the women’s confidence, raise awareness of the their labour conditions and change the way consumers identify with the clothes they wear. Lensational’s programme in Cox Bazar involved eight teenage beach vendors who are turning against traditional conventions by learning how to surf, in partnership with photojournalist Allison Joyce and partner Cox’s Bazar Surfing Community run by Venessa Rude. Through imagery, the girls documented and vocalised their experience. The Rich Mix Cultural Foundation in London held exhibitions to showcase both the garment workers’ and the surfer girls’ photographs. In 2017, Lensational trained daughters of garment workers in video-journalism, and the short films that the participants made were screened at Fashion Revolution Week at the Bengal Art Lounge and at the Frontline Club in London.

Featured photograph:

This photo is called *Them* by Aisha. Aisha just turned 10 years old, and is the youngest of the girls, but that doesn’t stop her from bossing them around. She is the younger sister of Rifa, and they both make and sell jewelry and provide the main income for the family. She loves wearing dresses and is the best skater of the girls.
Bhutan

20 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **November 2014** – Ana by Karma, a weaving social enterprise, trained 20 children of women from the weaving community on behalf of Lensational.
- **Ongoing** – The children continue to have access to cameras and laptops, and the Institute of Management Studies in Bhutan, which helped to select the participants, continues to provide monthly follow-up sessions with the children.

Context:
Bhutan is famous for its Gross National Happiness Index, but little is known about its gender gap in happiness: women in Bhutan are generally employed in low paid agricultural jobs, and earn 25% less than their male counterparts.

Lensational approach:
We partnered with a social enterprise called Ana by Karma that sells scarves made by illiterate women weavers in Bhutan to bring the art of photography to the weavers’ children. Ana by Karma had been working to empower the women weavers and wanted to further support their journeys through teaching their photography. With photography, the children could help their mothers take beautiful photos of their products in the future.

**Featured photograph:**
This photo is called *Midday in Bhutan* by Rohit Gajmer. Rohit skillfully captured the natural beauty and lush landscapes of Bhutan.
Nepal

10 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **Autumn 2015** – Provided photography training to 10 employees of a women-owned farm in Nepal

Context:
In 2015, Nepal ranked 121 of 136 countries in the Global Gender Gap report. One in two Nepali women married before the age of 18, while many experienced domestic violence and abandonment. Their country’s patriarchal system generally discouraged them from public life, leaving little room for self-expression.

Lensational approach:
In the middle of rural Nepal, one of the country’s only women-owned farms has set ambitions to provide a safe space and a self-sustaining community for abused and abandoned women in the region. Lensational reached Nepal through partnering with Mountain Fund, a non-profit organisation founded to protect Nepali women and give them the skills and safety to provide for themselves. Lensational worked with the inspiring employees of the Mountain Fund’s Her Farm whose photographs provide a glimpse into their lives, home villages, religion, and the nature that surrounds them.

Featured photograph:
This photo captures the natural beauty of Nepal’s landscape and wildlife. The rich, deep colours show the Nepal that our participants see and experience daily.
Cambodia

7 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **October 2015** – Photography training for women who run a micro-retail business in an HIV “ghetto” in Phnom Penh
- **Ongoing/future** - Providing continuous training via Skype on product photography, as well as support for participants to start online shops. We are also looking to connect with more Cambodian organisations and host an exhibition in Cambodia to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS locally.

Context:
From the detection of its first case of HIV infection in 1991, Cambodia has faced rapidly increasing HIV/AIDS incidence and prevalence rates, partly because of the rise of the sex tourism industry. Cambodia ranks the lowest in gender equality in Southeast Asia, according to the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index. Women with HIV/AIDS are doubly discriminated in society, barring them from access to the formal labour markets.

Lensational approach:
In 2012, a Lensational advisor met Thearith Soun, a 55-year-old seamstress with HIV who had lost her husband to HIV. She was barely surviving with a few handcrafting orders although her tailoring skills are better than that. She started a micro retail business, Jasmine Villa, with her daughter, Meimei. Meimei is very interested in photography, as she would like to take pictures for the products for online sales. Lensational provided photography training for her business and continues to support them through further training.

Featured photograph:
In this photo, two Lensational participants collaborate and analyse their work capturing products for online marketing.
India

20 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **January 2016** - Photography workshop for 8 girls at the Down’s Syndrome Federation of India
- **February 2016** – Photography workshop for 10 schoolgirls in Chennai in partnership with the Nalandaway Foundation

Context:
The importance of a girl’s education is not yet completely understood or taken seriously in most parts of India. Girls often face discrimination in the family or in the society, and tend to drop out of school before finishing class 5 or 6. Girls and women with disabilities face compounded and unique disadvantages. In India and beyond, many mistakenly believe Down’s syndrome is a disease. More awareness is needed to educate people around the syndrome.

Lensational approach:
Lensational has run two great programmes in India. Through our programme with the Down’s Syndrome Federation, a day-care center for individuals with special needs, we learned about the challenges faced by the women and how photography can help them in their journeys. Through our programme with schoolgirls in Chennai, these girls were able to unveil their daily realities, discover their ambitions and develop their creative skills. Several of the girls shared their enjoyment of photography and the workshops:

“I really loved the experience. It was so fun.” – Swetha Sri

“I would definitely participate [in future workshops]. A lot of my other friends are interested too.” – Kushboo Solanki

Photographs from both programmes were showcased at the Chennai Photo Biennale, and the Nalandaway girls’ photographs were selected to be part of the Purvai festival in Stornaway, Scotland.

Featured photograph:

This photo is called **Crimson** by Kushboo Solanki. It shows a special angle shot of four girls as they sit and wait for their first photography lesson to start. Kushboo is just 12 years old and faces special responsibility as the eldest in her family.
Kenya

12 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- January 2016 – Provided photography training to the girls living in the Mathare slum
- Ongoing – Dedicated support on stock photography via Mathare Foundation

Context:
Kenya is one of the most unequal countries in sub-saharan Africa, with 46% of people living in poverty. Research shows young women living in urban slums are at significant risk of early unplanned pregnancies, leading to poorer schooling outcomes and poorer health outcomes. In Kibera, 1 in 3 girls said they have experienced physical, emotional and sexual violence. Mathare is a slum in Kenya that hosts people who seek employment in the city without much luck, and a resulting large number of children without access to education.

Lensational approach:
Lensational partnered with the Mathare Foundation, a non-profit providing creative training to children in the slums of Mathare, to provide photography training to the girls living there. The creative energy of the participants in the photography workshop was apparent in the stories and their pictures. One of the girls wants to be a dancer and photographer when she grows up, while another wants to be a doctor. Millicent Lodenyi, a 13-year-old participant explained:

“I like photography because it encourages me and teaches me more to get photos and be active in the community.”

Featured photograph:
The participants’ photographs paint an intimate picture of Mathare, from its busy streets, to its energetic street footballers, and its hard-working mothers.
Thailand

12 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **January - April 2016** – Provided basic photography training programme to a pilot group of seven women and girls in Mae Wang, Thailand at the non-profit Daughters Rising. 7-8 workshops were conducted for the women in the programme.
- **May 2016** – Continuing photographic workshop for new participants and established participants focused on providing inspiration, reviewing camera function, and assisting in creating mentors of the experienced women.
- **October 2017** – Additional workshop organized by Daughters Rising.
- **January - April 2017** – Provided basic photography training programme to new women and girls in the Daughters Rising programme in Mae Wang. Provided additional training and opportunities to women from the pilot programme over a series of 4 workshops in Mae Wang at both the Daughters Rising/Chai Lai facility and in the individual village of the women.
- **Ongoing** – Through our partners, we are continuing to provide additional workshops and training in Mae Wang and at villages in Doi Inthanon.

Context:
Today, 150,000 Burmese refugees live in camps on the Thailand-Myanmar border, some of whom since the camps opened 25 years ago. These refugees, mainly women and young girls, are often excluded from education and employment and, like most Thai women in rural areas, are also at risk of being trafficked. This exclusion, perpetuated over generations, is likely to affect their daughters and granddaughters too.

Some of the women in the Lensational programme are Stateless Burmese Refugees, but the majority of our participants are Thai Karen, meaning that they are legal citizens of Thailand who live in villages (usually impoverished) in Doi Inthanon. The Karen are indigenous to the Thailand-Burma border region in Southeast Asia and are one of the many marginalised ethnic groups in Burma. These are rural communities surviving predominantly by farming and selling handmade crafts.

Lensational approach:
Working with Daughters Rising, an organisation working to prevent trafficking of at-risk girls through education and job training, Lensational provided photography training so these women could then take photographs of aspects of their lives typically not covered by outsiders. In March 2016, Sleepbox Gallery, a hotel in Chiang Mai, showcased their photographs in an exhibition. Limited edition prints and shirts were sold to fund the exhibition.

In **February 2017**, Lensational brought two Lensational participants, sisters Soe and Nut, to Bangkok to participate in a workshop training led by Getty Stock Photography. Soe is
24 and studied painting and drawing at the University. When asked why she wants to study photography, she replied “I want to take photographs of my culture.” Nut is 18; she is a beginning photographer who shows an interest in makeup artistry. Nut and Soe have been fervently saving their money in order to send Nut to college for nursing. Nut has witnessed the negative impact a lack of proper healthcare has for people in her village (and in other Karen villages) and has made a goal to help change that by becoming a nurse. At the workshop training, the women learned about stock photography, had portfolio reviews, photographed, and attended major exhibitions at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center.

**Featured photograph:**

This photo is called *The Little Girl* by Zong. This is one of Zong’s favorite photographs. Water splashes upon Gaw Lar’s face. Zong explains how the water makes this photograph powerful as the background remains blurred as the face and water is captured still. Zong is 24 years old and has Burmese and Kayan heritage but was born in Thailand. Zong’s parents were illegal refugees from Burma, this makes Zong “stateless” and without legal identification in either Burma or Thailand. Zong likes experimenting with abstract details by zooming in her photographs. Zong’s mother came to Thailand by request of the KNPP, an armed militant group. In Kayan culture, women wear brass rings on their necks, the long neck rings are considered beautiful in her culture, but both Zong and her family have suffered due to “long neck tourism.”
Singapore

43 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **May-July 2016** - Provided photography training to 12 domestic workers from Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar who are enrolled at Aidha, a micro-business school
- **November 2016** - Organised two ad-hoc photography workshops for 30 visitors, mostly female domestic workers

Context:
There are close to 250,000 foreign domestic workers in Singapore. They face varying qualities of living and employment conditions. But many often struggle with alienation, and it is an uphill journey towards negotiating their self-identity and regaining a sense of empowerment.

Lensational approach:
Lensational works with foreign domestic workers to foster a sense of community. Through the photography programme with Aidha, a micro-business school providing financial literacy classes for women, the students learned how to translate concepts that they had learned through other coaching classes - self-confidence and empowerment, leadership and gender equality - into visual imagery and storytelling. The Intersections Gallery in Bugis, Singapore hosted an exhibition of domestic workers' photographs at ‘This Is Me’, launched in conjunction with Aidha’s 10th anniversary. One of Lensational’s students was also asked to do freelance work for a pre-wedding shot. Lensational took part in the Affordable Art Fair Singapore in November 2016 as an education partner and showcased work from Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore.

Featured photograph:
This photograph was taken by Ritchelle Mantiquilla, 38, who is from Iloilo City in the Philippines and has been working in Singapore since 2009. She enjoys art and sketching and particularly enjoys working with abstracts as a medium. She says of the photograph:

*This photo was taken in the park in front of my house. They are my [friends] Maithili and Joy. They are of different races, of different countries, this is the first time they met each other. Joy (a Filipina) initially said, oh I don’t want to be friends with*
her, because she is Indian... But one time she went to Joy, and said, I want to be friends with you, I want to know who are you, I don’t have much friends, so they shook hands like that, I thought it was a good gesture, so I said can I take a photo of you.

I tried to interpret the picture as a sign of harmony and unity between two races, it doesn’t matter that they belong to this race or that race, or if they have fair skin... in terms of unity and harmony, we can be one. You shouldn’t be intimidated by people who are different than you.
Russia

15 women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **May – July 2016**: Photography training provided for a group of 15 mostly Filipino migrant workers at the Philippine Embassy in Moscow and in partnership with the Filipino Associate in Russia.

Context:
There are thousands of Filipino domestic workers in Moscow. 90% of the women there are working in low-paying jobs as housekeepers. Lensational’s programme in Moscow aims to empower them, help them find a sense of community, and provide additional income.

Lensational approach:
Jem Guanzon, who was a Lensational student in the Philippines in 2013, started Lensational’s Moscow programme with Saida Ibrahimava, the Director of Project Development for International Youth to Youth Initiative. Jem is a domestic worker and earns extra income as an event photographer for the Philippine Embassy in Moscow. She and several partners announced the programme on International Women’s Day in March 2016, and in the months following, hosted a series of workshops and photo walks based at the Philippine Embassy. Jem elaborated on what Lensational has taught her:

“I’ve learned a lot. Not only how to use a camera and techniques, but also how to have the courage to be yourself, to bring out the other side of you that’s not just a domestic worker. They teach with heart to have that courage to dream big. To dream big is to jump from domestic worker being a professional photographer someday.”

Featured photograph:
This photo is called **Church** by Jem Guanzon. It is a signature Orthodox Christian church in Moscow, striking in its scale, complexity, and beauty.
Ghana

7 young women & girls trained

Timeline:
- **October 2016 – September 2017** – Photography training with a group of young women ages 14-27, including an exhibition.
- **Future** – Focus on promotion, fundraising, setting up a country team, and planning for future programmes

Context:
There are many barriers that girls face in Ghana who hope to pursue education beyond junior high school level, such as gender stereotyping, forced early marriage, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, and parental neglect. Lensational aims to give girls and women a chance to express themselves, connect with their peers and the community, and overcome these hurdles.

Lensational approach:
In Ghana, Lensational is collaborating with KickStart Ghana, a UK and Ghanaian registered charity/NGO based in Ho, which works to enhance educational opportunities for Ghanaians. The Lensational programme connects with KickStart Ghana’s beneficiaries - teenage girls and young women. Our joint mission with KickStart Ghana is to offer photography workshops as an extra-curricular education opportunity, enabling the girls to tell their own stories through the powerful tool of photography, and encouraging them to stay committed to their educational aspirations. The participants are now working on one photography project each under the broader topic of “Women and Work,” which they chose themselves. Their projects will be exhibited in the future. The Lensational Ghana programme has established a strong connection with the local professional photography and social entrepreneurship scene. It enjoys the continuous support of photographer Francis Kokoroko, and is in discussion with other Ghanaian photographers who expressed their interest to be involved in the future. Additional partnerships include photowalks with PhotoWalk Ghana, under the leadership of Kafui Yevu, and Global Shapers Ho. The programme kick-off was supported by Danish photographer Abeline Bentzon who lead the initial workshops.

Featured photograph:
This photo was taken by 22-year-old Misper Apawu. She studied Marketing in Ho and is currently doing her National Service. She likes swimming, playing tennis and soccer. She would like to be able to stand out among her peers, and learn how to use photography to communicate to the world to express herself through photography and promote sports.
Vietnam

5 women & girls trained

Timeline:
• 2016 - Photography training for 5 disabled women in Dong Xoai

Context:
Individuals with disabilities in the developing world represent 80% of the world’s disabled population, but they are mostly ignored by government, social services, and society. Women are considered “multiply disadvantaged”: they are excluded on two counts: their gender, and their disability. In rural Vietnam, the story of the disabled is one of exclusion and invisibility, affecting women in poorer communities the most.

Lensational approach:
Lensational worked with the Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped for a 5-day photography workshop. One of the biggest challenges we faced in this programme was convincing participants’ families to participate in the photography training. Our partner, Marlee Quinn, recalls: “Although the patient has the ambition to become an artist, and is full of energy and excitement for the world, her family, who have her sleeping in a shed outside of the house, refused to let her participate in Lensational’s workshop. They said that they had given up on her, and were waiting for her to die.” This emphasizes the importance of this work: to showcase the perspectives and creativity of these women who are so often left behind.

Featured photograph:
This photo is called Phuong Anh’s bright future ahead by Le Thi Hoi. Hoi’s husband and daughter are in the photograph, and she articulated that it was an analogy for the future of her family. She saw her husband guiding her daughter to the bright future ahead after she has gone. Hoi is only 30 years old and has rheumatoid arthritis, but almost no access to treatment. Whilst this does not change her life expectancy, her way of seeing the picture shows how she perceives her future. She is a little shaky and shy, but vivid with imagination, and has a natural skill for drawing out the stories in photographs.
Social media advocacy

Since launching in 2013, Lensational’s social media platforms have grown substantially to total over 14,500 fans across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Medium. Our posts have reached a total audience reach of over 1 million, and engaged over 25,000. We are very proud of having reached a significantly more diverse audience than the average social media platform: our audience is 65% female, against 50% on average on Facebook and Twitter, and 50% of our Facebook fans hail from developing countries, despite these channels skewing heavily toward the developed world. Additionally, 50% of our Facebook and Twitter fans are between 18 and 34 years old. Our young audience will have influence on the future of gender norms globally. We are extremely proud of having created a dialogue on women’s empowerment and gender equality that is diverse and equal in representation, connecting women beyond the usual suspects, from the city of London to the rural regions of Ghana, and the coast of Bangladesh.

In addition to regular posting, we also run advocacy campaigns with partners to highlight and create discussions around specific gender issues. Our campaigns have reached and engaged people all over the world, including hard to reach locations, such as Thailand’s Karen villages, or the slums of Mathare.

Celebrate Women, in partnership with Nicole Chan
On International Women’s Day in 2017, we asked 200 women across 6 countries to answer the question “What empowers you?” in their own photoshoot. With the help of a trained photographer, participants answered the question visually through taking creative direction of their own photoshoot. The campaign, for which we partnered with photographer Nicole Chan, reached over 70,000 people on Facebook, creating a uniquely diverse dialogue between women in a variety of locations and situations.

“My Thai culture empowers me. I am biracial and as a teenager in Germany I felt like people viewed me as “other” even though I am half German. Now I live in Thailand and I feel empowered by my cultural identity. As soon as other Thais hear that I can speak Thai I feel welcome and accepted.” Kalina, Daughters Rising, Thailand

HerWorkMatters, in partnership with the Wonder Foundation
For International Worker’s Day in 2016, we partnered with the Wonder Foundation for a campaign titled #HerWorkMatters to bring attention to women’s issues in the workplace. The campaigns’ photographs featuring female garment factory workers in
Dhaka, Bangladesh, brought their under-reported stories to the fore. These were told by the women themselves, from their own perspectives.

Press features
Lensational also has developed a strong presence in the press, where we regularly share the stories and perspectives of our students on issues that are relevant to them. Their stories have been featured in global media outlets, including the following:

![The Guardian](https://example.com)
![TEDx](https://example.com)
![ABC News](https://example.com)
![Mashable](https://example.com)
![HuffPost](https://example.com)

Regular features in such publications have allowed our students’ views and voices to reach a much broader audience. These have also been instrumental in raising awareness of the under-reported issues they face, such as risk of trafficking, disability, labour migration, human rights abuses, and sexism.

One of our publications in *The Guardian* is a good illustration: In the below feature, our domestic helper students shared with the newspaper’s audience what being a migrant means to them, at the time, one of the rare articles written by migrants themselves during the refugee crisis.
Anik, 31, is from Malang, East Java. Her mother is a farmer. She loves hiking, which teaches her that her life is an adventure. Hiking also sparked her interest in photography. She likes to take landscape photos and wants to introduce the world to the beautiful scenery of Indonesia.

They say that maids have low status, but I don’t agree. In Hong Kong we can study at university. We are not just maids. We have experiences and many skills. Being a migrant worker is the start of my dream. In the future I want to be an army officer. I came to Hong Kong to earn money so that I can study to join the army.

As time went on, I started to enjoy being a migrant worker. I can buy things, I can learn things. I like Hong Kong now. When I first got here I would cry if my boss was angry with me or I missed my family in Indonesia. But now I’m happy, because my boss is like family to me.

Events and conferences

*Lensational volunteers have spoken about the organisation at 30 events in 10 countries, on topics including female migration, female factory work, sexism, female representation in photography, female entrepreneurship.*

In addition to hosting and speaking at panel events, we also regularly organize photography exhibitions showcasing our students’ photographs, their story, and their artistic voice. So far, over 4,000 people have attended exhibitions in Bangladesh, Hong Kong, London, Paris, Singapore and Thailand, at events including the Chennai Biennale, the Affordable Art Fair in Singapore, Art Represent and Rich Mix in London, and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, to name a few.

The feedback we received from visitors at these events, collated and shown to the artists when possible, demonstrates the impact that Lensational has beyond the photographers themselves to the general public:

*“Very touching exhibition. The emotion of isolation & hope is so present in every picture. The responsibility of everyone of us is generally important. I am glad to be here.”*

*“Beautiful photos showing the power of releasing the capabilities of the ones who had no voice before. Keep up the good work, it touches my heart.”*

Lensational has held film screenings in London, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Dhaka for the short documentary Ami, Amar, Ma, (Myself and My Mother) shot by the daughters of garment workers in Bangladesh. In Hong Kong, ⅔ of attendees felt that they learned
more about garment factory workers and that the film gave them a unique every day insight into the girls’ and mothers daily lives.

Because advocacy is at the heart of Lensational’s mission, we have developed an extensive framework to measure our impact in the media. At the core of this framework are three goals, and related metrics:

**Goal 1: Raise awareness of gender issues and of the issues faced by the women we work with**

We measure our impact related to this goal by the number of people that our posts reach (meaning that the post appears on someone’s Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Medium feed) and the demographics of this audience. By creating an impression on our audience, we work towards raising awareness of gender and empowerment issues around the world.

The below information is on our reach from January 2016 - July 2017:

- Total number of impressions (number of times a post was displayed on a feed)\(^4\):
  - Facebook: 1,230,292
  - Twitter: 328,824
- Total number of **people** reached by Facebook posts: 51,896
- Number of people reached by Facebook posts for each campaign:
  - Celebrate Women: 78,542
  - Her Work Matters: 6,335
  - Her Lens Her Story: 28,904

With over one million Facebook impressions and tens of thousands of people reached across all platforms, our advocacy work has brought much-needed attention to the issues that women and girls face daily.

The demographics of our social media reach show a diverse, global audience.\(^5\) Not only do we have a higher than average reach within the female demographic, but we’re also really proud that men are involved in the discussion – they account for a third of our fans. Additionally, our young audience has the capacity to impact the future of gender relations. More than 50% of our Facebook reach is in the developing world, which means that our work and our participants’ stories are being seen by their peers and challenging stereotypes directly.

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\(^{4}\) This is not a ‘people’ number, as a post can show up multiple times in a feed for one person. These metrics are not available for Twitter and Instagram.

\(^{5}\) Demographic data is not available for Instagram and Medium.
Goal 2: Facilitate discussion and participation in discussion around issues affecting women globally – especially in the locations we work in

Our social media advocacy seeks to engage with a wide audience to foster discussions, elicit feedback, and create a broader dialogue around gender issues. To measure the impact of these efforts, we look at the number of people that engage with posts on our social media accounts. 22,690 people have engaged with our Facebook posts, and 2,922 have engaged with our tweets since January 2016.6

6 Engagement data from Medium and Instagram is not available.
Engagement amplifies our message beyond our fans to each individual person’s network and brings the discussion about gender, women’s empowerment, and photography to a broader scale. It also encourages our audience to think critically about these issues, form opinions, listen to others, and share their views. Through engagement, we are contributing to a more informed and engaged public.

**Goal 3: Create a database of stories freely available for the audience to learn about gender issues and women’s stories**

Through our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Medium pages, we host a database of content - articles, photos, posts - about gender issues that are relevant to our mission. We consistently update these pages and add content about new programmes, exhibitions, and photos from our participants. Moreover, we post content from other organizations, such as news articles, that is relevant to our work. For example, we recently posted an article on Facebook from the New York Times called “Highlighting Women in Photojournalism.” As such, those who are interested can keep up with and engage with the global discussion occurring around these issues through our advocacy pages.

For example, on Medium, we have a general Lensational channel in which we post about photography, entrepreneurship, youth activism, social responsibility, and gender equality, to name a few. On this page, we also recommend posts by like-minded organizations on relevant topics. See the below screenshot for an example.

In conjunction with the general Lensational channel, we also manage another page called Photography for Social Change focusing specifically on how marginalised women can be empowered through photography. Through these two channels, we contribute to the discussion on both technology and gender, but also on the broader debate about social entrepreneurship, activism, and other relevant topics.
Looking Ahead

In order to build upon and improve Lensational’s programmes, the team is going to focus upon three main areas.

(1) Improving Impact Reporting

As of this year, Lensational programme managers have begun to systematically collect data through pre- and post-workshop participant surveys as well as focus groups to provide more in depth data. This will enable Lensational to measure impact at the outcome level. With this additional information, Lensational will ensure that lessons learned feed into improving our photography workshops. This also enables Lensational to provide more detailed reporting to our current/potential donors & partners.

In addition, our research team will be exploring different participatory research methods to ensure that we learn from innovative practices already being used & work to develop our own. We plan to partner with research departments at a number of universities to explore best practices and the latest thinking in this area.

(2) Increasing Photography Sales

Lensational aims to reach a 50-50 funding model between grants and earned income. We have currently raised seed funding to staff our core team so that we will be able to work towards a hybrid model with less reliance on grants and by 2018. Implementing technological infrastructure and automating processes will also enable Lensational to focus on revenue generating activities such as developing relationships with corporate partners, prospecting, and selling photographs.

(3) Diversifying our Programmes

Moreover, in 2017 we have been diversifying our programmes & now offer continuous/advanced training component to our students. The modules that we currently offer that can be delivered on-demand include:

Stock Photography

We have been working closely with Getty Images to understand the characteristics of stock photos that make them successful; and we are adapting a training module from Getty Images.
Videography

We have piloted a video journalism programme in Bangladesh in partnership with Rainbow Collective. This resulted in a short-film documentary 'Daughters of Bangladesh Garment Factory Workers' (Trailer here). It premiered at the Bengal Art Lounge in Dhaka, Bangladesh as part of the Fashion Revolution Week. The documentary presents the personal stories of 5 girls aged 7 to 15, compiled over 4 days in March 2017. The girls wrote, directed and shot the short film based on their own life experiences, focusing on their relationship with their mothers.

Photography Services

We are currently piloting a training programme focused on Wedding Photography in Thailand, and the manual is ready for rollout. For Travel Photography, we have an interested partner to co-develop this with Lensational: WanderSnap. For School Photography, our Arthur Reed Photos donated some professional kit to us, and we can consult them to develop the module. For Event Photography, MZ Photography reached out to us and did some free event photography for us, so we can reach out to him for some consultation.

Journalism & Entrepreneurship

We have journalists from our team who give advice to our students in developing their work. One of our students from Hong Kong curates the Humans of Hong Kong Facebook page. Further, we have conducted specific training on product photography for micro-entrepreneurs in Cambodia, so that they can promote their products more effectively through social media channels.
For more information, please contact us at info@lensational.com or visit us at Unit 4, Benwell Studios, 11-13 Benwell Road, N7 7BL London, United Kingdom.