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⚙️ IMPACT IN ACTION

📁 IMPACT DISTRIBUTION

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📊 MEASURING IMPACT

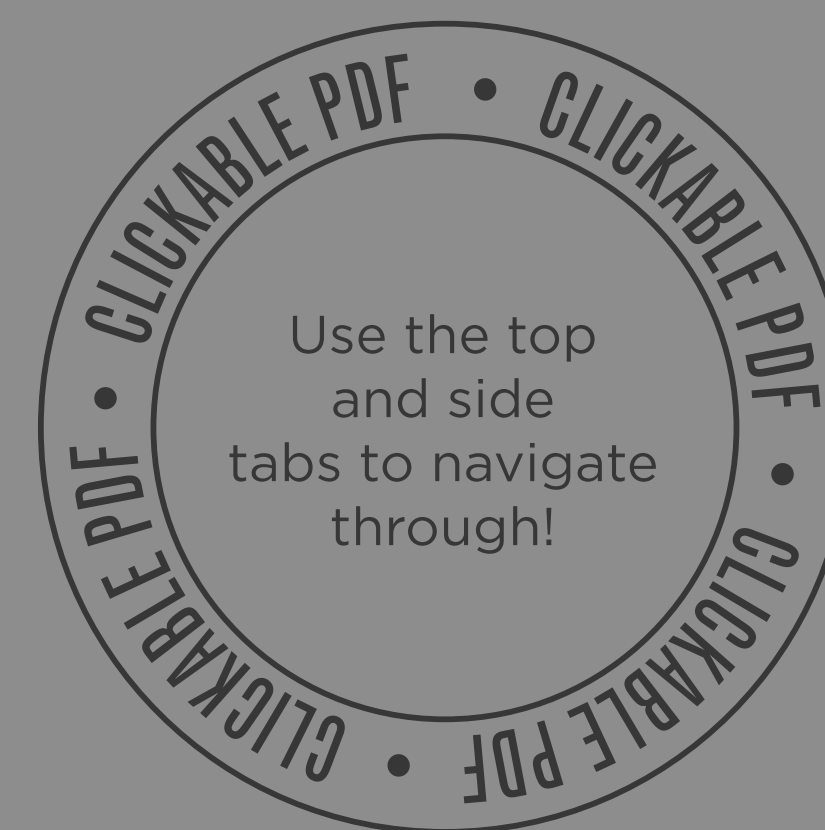
📖 IMPACT LIBRARY

THE IMPACT

# FIELD GUIDE

& TOOLKIT

*From Art to Impact*



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A set of tools and guides designed to help all of us who are working with film make even greater impact than we do already.

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# WELCOME TO VERSION 2.0 OF THE IMPACT FIELD GUIDE.

**W**e believe that the 21st century has become one in which the power of film to change the world is impossible to ignore. And our mission is to share bold ideas and best practice with global filmmakers and changemakers. To make sure the most important non-fiction documentary films reach the audiences that matter. We are **Doc Society**, a non-profit Foundation with team based in London, New York & Amsterdam, working to support the global community of documentary filmmakers. And we are delighted that you have picked up the Impact Field Guide. An open source resource being used by over 55,000 filmmakers and change makers around the world.

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Through the hard work and commitment of thousands of dedicated individuals working in the intersection of film, community & movement, we've seen it all this past decade: profound artistic contributions, journalistic revelations, radical innovation and serious societal change. This updated guide is intended to harness some of that energy. Not to control it or pretend that there's only one way to do this work – nothing could be further from the truth. We offer ideas and approaches so you don't have to solve a problem that someone else has already cracked, and can focus on the unique challenges of your own project.

This new edition of the Impact Field Guide was lovingly & tirelessly updated in 2019 by Impact Strategist **Sahar Driver** in San Francisco. The design materialised by our colleagues Sarah Nicholson & Matt Fisher at **Involved Design** in London.

Once again we've drawn on collaborations & conversations with incredibly smart film teams, academics, cultural curators, Impact Producers and their partners from all over the world. For this latest edition, that included contributions from: Jad Abi-Khalil, Macky Alston, Abigail Anketell-Jones, Lindsay Green Barber, Julia Bacha, Stephanie Bleyer, Kylie Boltin, Jeffrey Bowers, Caitlin Boyle, Marco Cartolano, Giuliano Cavalli, Sonya Childress, Kristy Chin, Brenda Coughlin, Inti Cordera, Santhosh Daniel, Abby Davis, Fiona Dawson, Dina de Veer, Cristine Platt Dewey, Jamie Dobie, Jo-Jo Ellison, Violet Feng, Deirdre Fishel, Edie Gill Holder, Amelia Hapsari, Lee Hirsch, Will Jenkins, Anita Khanna, Judy Kibinge, Fiona Lawson-Baker, Rachel Lears, Sheila Leddy, Alex Lee, Wendy Levy, John Lightfoot, Kathleen Lingo, Mary Macrae, Ani Mercedes, Molly Murphy, Joanna Natasegara, Ina Pira, Michael Premo, Alice Quinlan, Khushboo Ranka, Larissa Rhodes, Theo Rigby, Flor Rubina, Ellen Schneider, Michèle Stephenson, Fran Sterling, Paulina Suárez, Sandra Tabares-Duque, Jennifer Maytorena Taylor, Poh Si Teng, Ayse Toprak, Sophy Sivaraman, Ilse van Velzen, Lynette Wallworth, Emily Wanja, Banker White, Sydelle Willow Smith, Malinda Wink, Samantha Wright, Pamela Yates, Luis González Zaffaroni, Amy Ziering.

In this **introduction** we offer theoretical and practical foundations to get the wheels turning. Spend a few moments reflecting on how art inspires change. Get to know several in-depth case studies featured throughout the guide. We have links to a great many more, all in our **[Library](#)**.



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We recommend you read as many as possible – particularly for films or campaigns closest to your own work.

Our section on [PLANNING FOR IMPACT](#) guides you through developing your vision and strategy to achieve your goals. [IMPACT IN ACTION](#) encourages you to think about who does what and how much it will cost. [IMPACT DISTRIBUTION](#) explores who will see your film and how they might experience the impact. [MAKING AND MOVING SHORTS](#) is our new chapter that examines this form in the context of renewed interest in it. [MEASURING IMPACT](#) completes the circle with methods to track outcomes that tie directly to your goals. In this updated version, we include a new chapter on working with short form films, updates on global distribution, considerations around risk and safety for film subjects, reflections on filmmaking as an emancipatory practice and new examples of innovative film campaigns from every continent.

This is a big beast of a toolkit. Please take your time and drop in and out of the chapters as you see fit. Noting that everything that is [bold and underlined](#) is a hyperlink. Which should allow you to move rapidly inside the toolkit but also jump out to external resources. To encourage going deeper, we also have **Geek Out** sections, with suggestions of further reading, interesting articles or provocations accompanying each chapter.

The toolkit isn't definitive, but it's meant to get you started on your journey. That's also true culturally. While this updated version draws heavily from American and European contexts, it also contains examples from colleagues working from Australia to China and India, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, and back up to Colombia.

What we want most is to hear from you. [Tell us what you think](#) works for you and what doesn't. Help us to create a better resource for all.

Most of all, we're excited to discover what tomorrow's filmmakers are going to do with their work. The possibilities are endless.

With love and respect to all embarking on the journey,  
[The Doc Society Team](#)



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## THE POWER OF FILM

**W**e designed this chapter to give you a chance to reflect on how you got to the point of embarking on a social impact documentary — before we deep dive into planning on your current project.

We'll explore the possibilities for social and environmental change and how they are impacted by different conditions & contexts. We will consider the challenges of marrying art and impact. And we'll take you through an exercise to discover more about your own motivations and needs. But first, some questions on the particular property of documentary film.

It is a given that films have the capacity to influence people and lead them to new perspectives. That is the power, the experience, of cinema. But what is it about documentary in particular that can effect change?

**We found that four big reasons sprung out of the literature and our communities' lived experience in the field:**

**“Stories can conquer fear you know. They can make the heart larger.”**

Ben Okri, Artist





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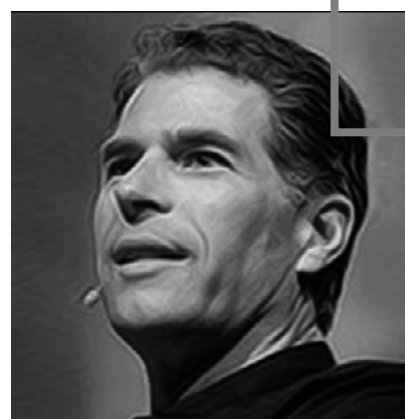
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**“Stories are powerful because they transport us into other people’s worlds but, in doing that, they change the way our brains work.”**

Paul Zak, Professor of Economics and founding Director of the Center for Neuroeconomics



**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

# One. Documentary makers rock at storytelling, and great storytelling inspires change.

Unlike most news and social media, documentary storytelling can pull audiences into an immersive experience, taking the time to build empathy or understanding more deeply. They tell stories about the lives of real people in ways that help audiences make or see connections—about ideas or issues—that may otherwise seem abstract. The audience is often changed by the experience. That’s why documentary, especially when used strategically, has the capacity to prompt people to engage and act.

Neuroeconomist Paul Zak has demonstrated the effect of storytelling on the brain’s chemistry, finding that it increases levels of both cortisol and oxytocin and makes us more likely to take action.

Want to dig a little deeper into this one?

Here are a couple of great free resources — there’ll be more to come in the **Library** as we release more modules, and we’d love to hear your suggestions too.

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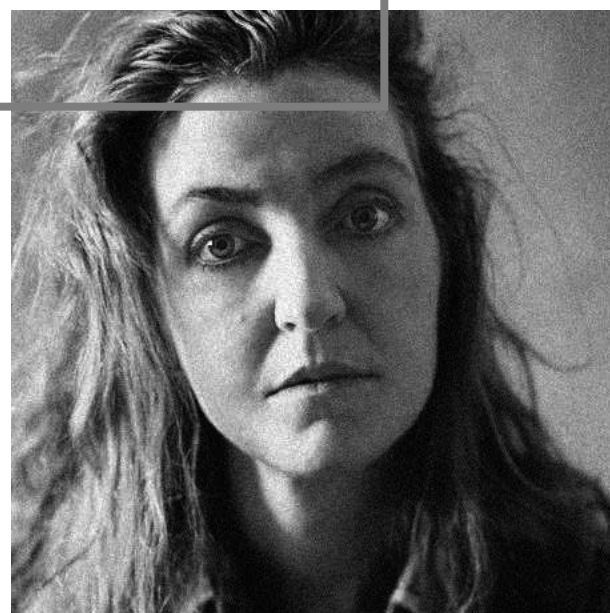
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**“Politics rise out of culture, and you can change some particular consequences through legislation and opposition but to change the causes is cultural work”**

Rebecca Solnit  
Writer (From an interview  
in *The Believer*)



**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

## Two. Documentaries help create culture, and culture leads change.

Filmmakers don't write policy recommendations, we introduce new narratives, voices and information so that policy recommendations can be understood in a new light. We create cultural moments, or we tie storytelling to such moments, to open opportunities for people to make new connections. And that collective energy opens the space for change to happen – a snowball effect for more stories to be told and heard, and for people who have the will to seize the moment.

Documentaries, by telling the true stories of real people, play an important role in helping audiences making the connection between broader issues or ideas and people's lives.

US-based organisation The Culture Group's *Making Waves* report is a powerful argument for cultural change, drawing evidence from such social issues as marriage equality, civil rights, and the DREAMer movement to show how cultural moments – from the first black player in US major league baseball to Ellen DeGeneres coming out on live television – anticipated and created the opportunity for many of the political and legal changes that later followed.

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## Three. Filmmakers can bring new energy to an issue.

Because filmmakers see the story within an issue in a new way, we can provide much needed focal points to help others see it, too. Film teams can then use real people's stories to bring about coalitions and partnerships that never previously existed, or to simply recognise common goals and coordinate efforts.

That doesn't give us the right to bulldoze. The communities we work with, especially if they are not our own, will still have to do the hard work themselves. We'll discuss the ethics and responsibilities that a film team has to its subjects, audiences and communities in general in [Section 3.5](#), but suffice it to say that when offered in the right spirit, films can be a great gift.

**“Film is incredibly democratic and accessible, it's probably the best option if you actually want to change the world, not just re-decorate it”**

Banksy, Artist

**GEEK OUT**  
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**“One of the functions of art, is to give people the words to know their own experience... Storytelling is a tool for knowing who we are and what we want.”**

Ursula K. Le Guin

## Four.

# It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it.

Storytelling has intrinsic properties - but what you do with that story is everything. Today, documentary filmmakers are reaching beyond the offer of traditional distribution on television or in cinemas to think about “Impact,” “Outreach” and “Engagement” campaigns. These are all words used today to describe the plans a film team puts in place to ensure that their film spurs change on an issue - where they are deliberate about who needs to see a film, what audiences need to do, and what partnerships, tools and resources are needed to reach the desired goals of the campaign.

This covers a wide range of activities, from getting your film in front of politicians who are helping to influence policy, to developing plans with NGO partners so they can use it to mobilise supporters and reach new communities, or developing a curriculum guide to help educators use it in the classroom.

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**“Art is restoration:  
the idea is to repair  
the damages that are  
inflicted in life, to  
make something that  
is fragmented — which  
is what fear and  
anxiety do to a  
person — into  
something whole.”**

Louise Bourgeois



## Four.

# It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it.

This work can be short term — just a few months — or turn into a year-long or multi-year long campaign. It can be run by the filmmaker, or by other expert individuals or organisations.

In many parts of the world, this was the only way to get your films to audiences. Perhaps today, with the shattering of traditional models, all filmmakers everywhere now have the opportunity and the incentive to use these creative, inventive techniques.

But first things first: how should filmmakers assess the kind of impact that is possible for our films?



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### 1. DOCUMENTARY MAKERS ROCK AT STORY-TELLING AND STORYTELLING INSPIRES CHANGE

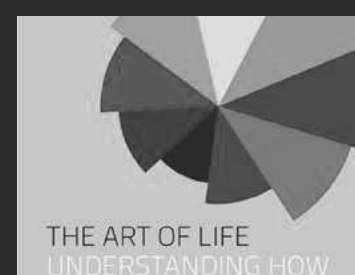


##### Paul Zak

Twitter @pauljzak

Explore Paul Zak's thinking more deeply by checking out his twitter on neuroscience

and economic behaviour.



##### The Art of Life: Understanding how participation in arts and culture can affect our values

[valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF\\_report\\_the\\_art\\_of\\_life.pdf](http://valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF_report_the_art_of_life.pdf)

A report on dialogue about how arts and culture impact on our values, what that might look like in practice, and how we might foster new collaborations between artists, cultural institutions and the third sector to create new ideas for development. By Professor of Psychology Tim Kasser, the artist Ellie Harrison, playwright Mike Van Graan, campaigner Tom Crompton, designer (Dan Russell), a director of a cultural organisation (Donald Smith), and two academics from very different disciplines (Eleonora Belfiore and Ed Deci).

##### #ArtsJustice

[youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0oIZTxMxeDPy-2oCaUNP2Vg4C2kqRZ1m](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0oIZTxMxeDPy-2oCaUNP2Vg4C2kqRZ1m)

#ArtsJustice is 19 videos where artists tell their stories, exemplifying the role that art has as a force for social justice.

##### Pop Culture Works for Social Change

[andaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Pop-Culture-Works-for-Social-Change\\_FINAL.pdf](http://andaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Pop-Culture-Works-for-Social-Change_FINAL.pdf)

A guide on how to strategically use the power of popular culture to engage people around important causes. Includes inspiration, best practices & resources.

#### 2. DOCUMENTARIES HELP CREATE CULTURE, AND CULTURE LEADS CHANGE



##### Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy

[theculturegroup.org](http://theculturegroup.org)

[org/2013/08/31/making-waves/](http://org/2013/08/31/making-waves/)

Check out the Culture Group's tour of culture's leading role on social change issues from civil rights to marriage equality.

#### 3. FILMMAKERS CAN BRING NEW ENERGY TO AN ISSUE

##### Reflections on the Catalytic Role of an Outsider

[community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/paper-bergdall.pdf](http://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/paper-bergdall.pdf)

Get the development movement perspective on the right role for outsiders with Terry Bergdall's paper reflecting on Asset Based Community Development – an approach to development that focuses on the strengths and capacities of local communities.

##### Radical Media

[books.google.co.uk/books/about/Radical\\_media.html?id=J9BoAAAAIAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Radical_media.html?id=J9BoAAAAIAAJ&redir_esc=y)

While you're at it, why not brush up on radical media theory, which emphasises egalitarianism, inclusivity, action, and social movement amplification? Check out 'Radical Media' by John Downing.

##### Stamford Social Innovation Review

[ssir.org/articles/entry/using\\_story\\_to\\_change\\_systems](http://ssir.org/articles/entry/using_story_to_change_systems)

From Stamford Social Innovation Review on the need to develop new processes of collective storytelling across sectors to navigate turbulent times and foster systems change.

#### 4. IT AIN'T WHAT YOU DO, IT'S THE WAY THAT YOU DO IT

##### Preaching to The Choir By Rebecca Solnit

[harpers.org/archive/2017/11/preaching-to-the-choir/](http://harpers.org/archive/2017/11/preaching-to-the-choir/)

This essay by Rebecca Solnit emphasises the art of listening and discussion and points to why 'preaching to the choir' should be about going deeper with those who generally agree with you, to push past basic agreement to work out the details and push for action.



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## UNDERSTAND THE STORY ENVIRONMENT

**H**ow can we understand what kind of impact is possible with a documentary film? Are there certain kinds of films or topics which are more likely to create impact?



**“Tyrants always fear art because tyrants want to mystify while art tends to clarify. The good artist is a vehicle of truth, he formulates ideas which would otherwise remain vague and focuses attention upon facts which can then no longer be ignored. The tyrant persecutes the artist by silencing him or by attempting to degrade or buy him. This has always been so.”**

Iris Murdoch

We have found that whether an issue is relatively known or unknown, and whether there is strong and organised opposition or little resistance, is key in determining which kinds of films take

hold in the culture. This is useful to reflect on with your own project as it helps to determine what success looks like and enables you to be realistic about how much change can follow.

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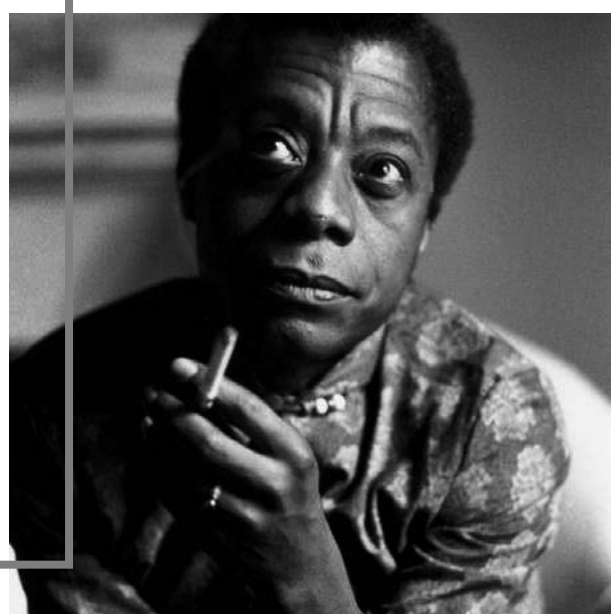
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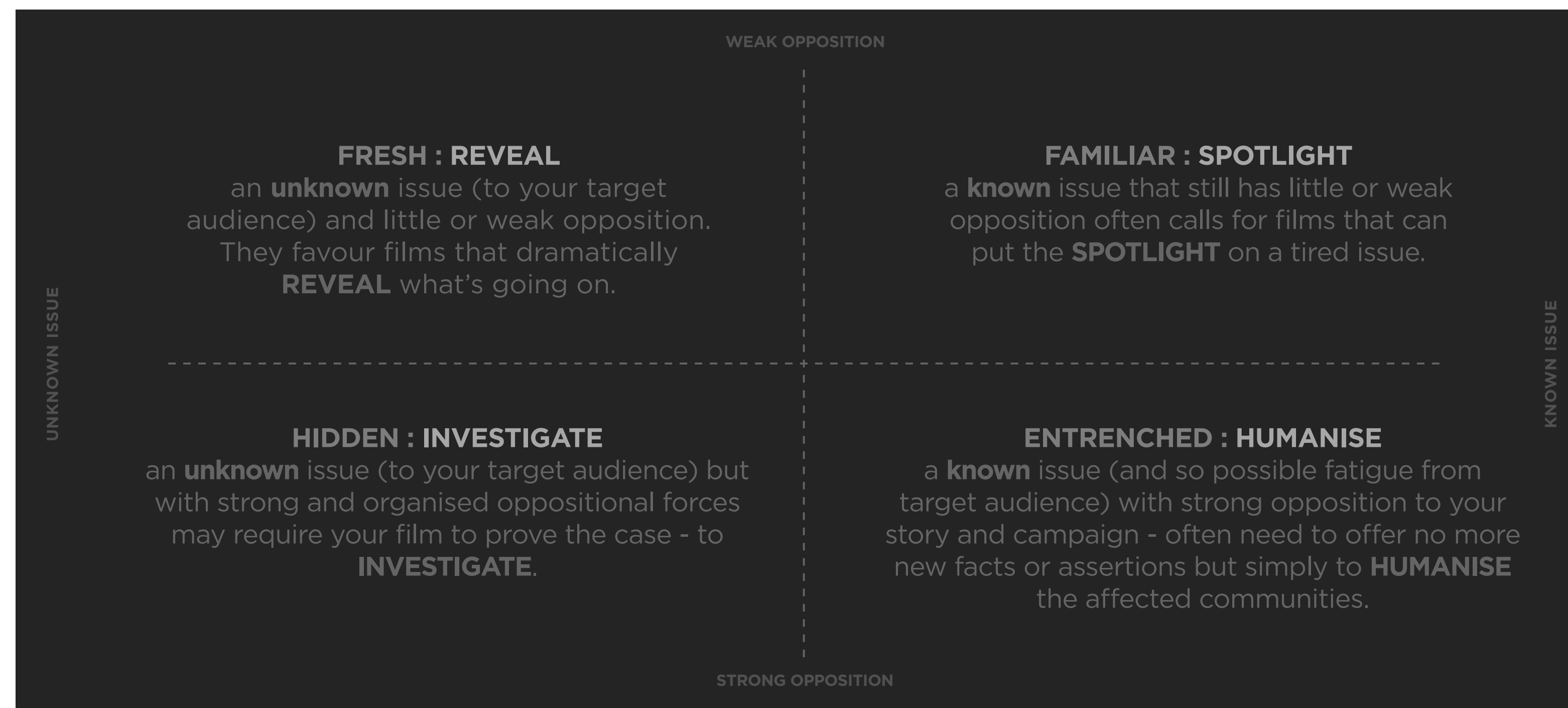
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“Those who tell you ‘Do not put too much politics in your art’ are not being honest. If you look very carefully you will see that they are the same people who are quite happy with the situation as it is... What they are saying is don’t upset the system.”

James Baldwin



Noting that, while many documentaries investigate, reveal, spotlight and humanise, they do tend to have a dominant emphasis. Set that against the environment into which you are releasing and you can gain useful insight into the kind of change you can hope to achieve. **Have a look at each quadrant in this diagram to think about this further:**



In some **FRESH** environments, where people are unaware of a problem and no one is fighting against you, success could mean causing a sea change in public opinion, it could be triggering new laws to be written, or compelling companies to publicly apologise. But this kind of result isn’t always possible given the external restraints, no matter how brilliant the film and campaign. In **ENTRENCHED** environments, for example, moving the dial just one degree is a huge achievement and worth all the effort.

Let’s consider some examples as you reflect on the environment you are operating in and what that means for your definition of success and the tactics you adopt.



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WEAK OPPOSITION

### REVEAL: THE INVISIBLE WAR

*The Invisible War* came into an issue space with almost no credible opposition possible. Nobody is in support of rape in the military. And, beyond the victims themselves, the issue was almost completely unknown to the wider public. *The Invisible War* was able to reveal the truth in a way that could no longer be ignored - such as the fact that 1 in 4 female soldiers are sexually assaulted by their own colleagues. Facts which would resonate deeply and all the way up the command structure of the US military in a relatively short space of time.

WATCH

UNKNOWN ISSUE

### SPOTLIGHT: BULLY

*Bully*, by contrast, came into a space where the issue has been on the radar since formal education began - but that itself was the problem. The ingrained belief that bullying is a matter of 'kids will be kids' has allowed the issue to embed and become normalised: a tragically inappropriate mindset, which *Bully* was able to spotlight in the US public eye and force people to confront. This bold approach tried to create a cultural moment across an entire nation, to unite and rally a movement of kids and teachers in every city and in every state.

WATCH

KNOWN ISSUE

### INVESTIGATE: GASLAND

*Gasland* explained the new technology of fracking to the American public and urged citizens to use the law to oppose it being brought to their communities. Because the filmmakers were taking on powerful industries - oil and gas - they had to expect strong opposition, and that they would face counterclaims to their depiction of the negative environmental effects. Therefore, their challenge was to investigate and prove their case.

WATCH

STRONG OPPOSITION

### HUMANISE: BUDRUS

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict could not be more well-known. However, unlike bullying, the barriers to genuine progress run far deeper than a need for a shift in attitudes. People's minds are often made up and their positions supported by intransigent community leaders, press and lobbyists. Despite this, *Budrus* has been able to achieve something by humanising the issue. There are no new facts, research or data with such an approach - simply people and a story which help make nonviolence more visible, thereby helping to shift the dialogue.

WATCH

#### MORE EXAMPLES:

Reveal: *Blackfish*

Spotlight: *Bag It* and *The House I Live In*

Investigate: *No Fire Zone*

Humanise: *Who Is Dayani Cristal?*



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WEAK OPPOSITION

REVEAL: 9.70

This film, about the persecution of local farmers by the government, landed in Colombia with a bang. Law 9.70, quietly adopted in 2010, made it illegal for Colombian farmers to store seeds after a harvest, giving private transnational corporations control over the market. But most people didn't know about this, though anger had been brewing. The film helped fuel this popular resistance, which the multinational corporations and the governments were not expecting.

WATCH

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STRONG OPPOSITION

INVESTIGATE: VIRUNGA

At the time of its release, *Virunga* was another film about an unknown issue: illicit oil exploration within the Democratic Republic of Congo's protected Virunga National Park. While the campaign was much broader than this, one of the film's main functions was to thrust the issue into the public view. The team worried they would be faced with a strong and organised opposition from the company that was leading the exploration and building local support for its activities. So, they made sure to triple-check their story and enlisted the support of a legal team to ensure every angle was covered and to help them navigate the resistance that they knew was coming.

WATCH

KNOWN ISSUE

WEAK OPPOSITION

SPOTLIGHT: PLEASE REMEMBER ME

Almost 10 million families in China struggle with Alzheimer's and dementia. This is no secret, yet popular attitudes are dismissive and even derogatory towards people who suffer from the diseases. Enter the documentary *Please Remember Me*, a touching love story about a couple trying to find a way to live in a society that doesn't provide them with their needs. With almost no opposition to contend with, the film team was able to draw a lot of attention to the issue and inspire new programs and initiatives. In fact, they even inspired one community in Shanghai - Changshou Community - to pledge to become the first "Dementia Friendly Community" of China.

WATCH

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STRONG OPPOSITION

HUMANISE: CHASING CORAL

In a US context, where climate change is politically polarised and denial is rampant, the *Chasing Coral* team faced a challenge: how to get more people to care about this issue and, in particular, coral ecosystems. The team, of course, provided data and information about the dangers they face, but the film's true power lay in the way it humanised the issue, pulling people into the experiences of the scientists who love the reefs and were deeply saddened by the tremendous loss they were witnessing.

WATCH

**MORE EXAMPLES:**

Reveal: [Blackfish](#)

Spotlight: [Bag It](#) and [The House I Live In](#)

Investigate: [No Fire Zone](#)

Humanise: [Who Is Dayani Cristal?](#)



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Now remember: this is not an exhaustive framework. There are so many other factors you might be contending with depending on where you and your film are positioned, from censorship and other legal considerations to extreme polarisation or distrust. Each might require a whole different set of tactics and story-based tools to ensure that you'll have an impact.

Use this framework as an exercise and an illustration to start thinking about the interplay between what a film can do within the issue landscape you intend for it to land in, and to start thinking realistically about what's needed - what you want to do, and what you can do, especially if these things don't line up.

As a very simple first exercise, think about which impact films you most admire and where you would place them on this axis.

**Now, thinking about your current project:**

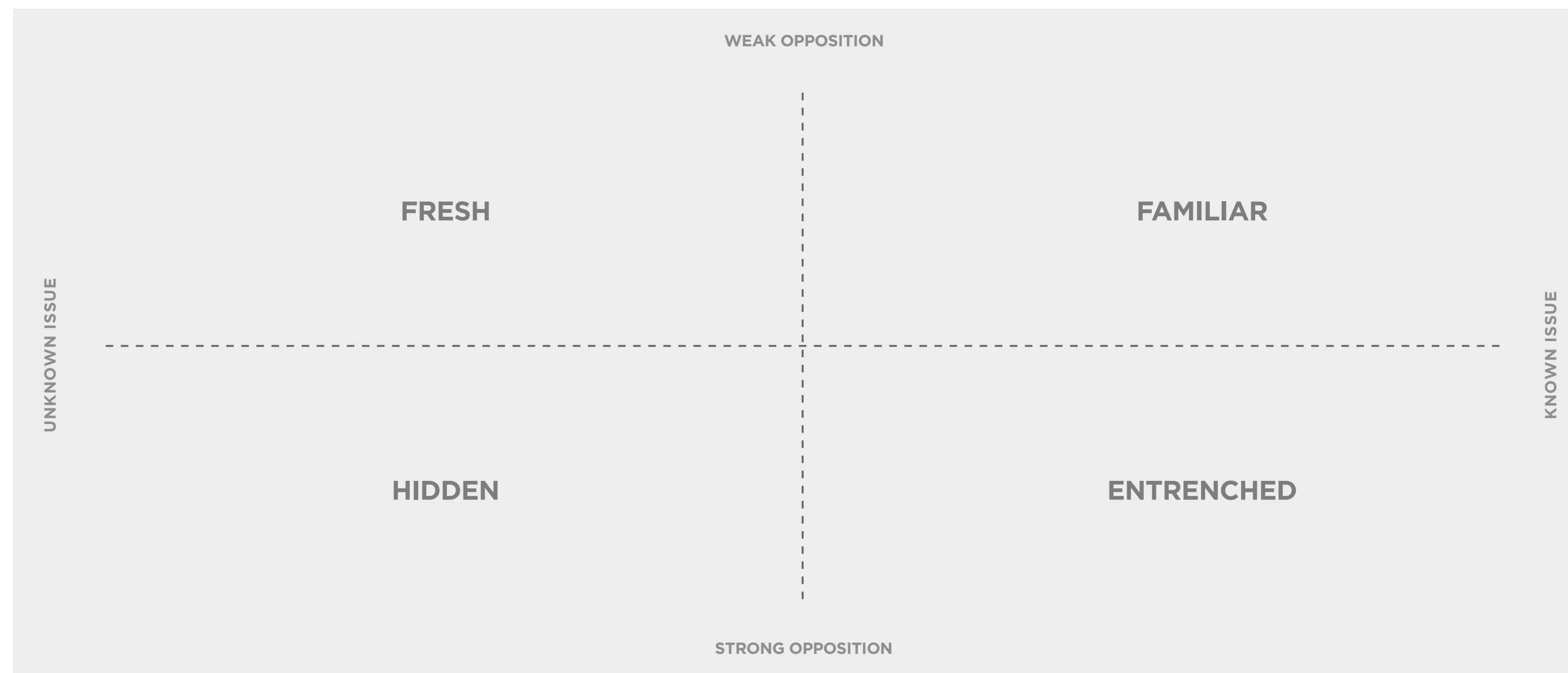
Is the issue **UNKNOWN** or **KNOWN** (to the people you want to reach)?;

Is the opposition: **WEAK** or **STRONG**?

Go to the **Library** and find more case studies of films operating in the same environment as you.

Would you like a little more help thinking about what your film's core strengths are as you consider the issue environment it's likely to land in? There's no one way to do this, but there are other resources available to help you. And we are going to get into this even more deeply in the sections coming up.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING





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## HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

**H**ow change happens is a huge topic, and the subject of lively ongoing debate. Our aim in this chapter is to share core theories so we can think about it in relation to our films and the impact campaigns that we are planning. For us, the big question that comes up over and over again can be summarised in five words:

Top down or bottom up?

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Top down or bottom up?

This refers to a critical division in the theories of change both within and beyond film projects. This section looks at the theoretical extremes of each

side (the Top Downers and the Bottom Uppers), pulling apart the two in order to make clear what each has to offer, then bringing them together with two key film case studies to ask whether this division is really so pronounced.

**“Slavery wasn’t a crisis for British and American elites until abolitionism turned it into one. Racial discrimination wasn’t a crisis until the civil rights movement turned it into one. Sex discrimination wasn’t a crisis until feminism turned it into one. Apartheid wasn’t a crisis until the anti-apartheid movement turned it into one.”**

Naomi Klein

*This Changes Everything:  
Capitalism vs. The Climate*



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## Top down change

Top down approaches have arguably dominated thinking about how change happens until relatively recently.

It's a school of thought which says that, since the formal structures of society dictate how society works, then the goal of change campaigns needs to be focused around changing those structures. Often this means targeting lawmaking and political decision makers at local, national or intergovernmental levels, as well as attempting to influence the CEOs, boards and stakeholders of national and multinational corporations.

**“Culture does not change because we desire to change it. Culture changes when the organisation is transformed; the culture reflects the realities of people working together every day.”**

Frances Hesselbein,  
The Key to Cultural  
Transformation,  
Leader to Leader



The worldview from which top down working makes most sense is one which sees society as a machine which broadly works, but requires fixing. Individual problems can be analysed and addressed, and the machine reprogrammed to make it work better. Widespread public awareness of the issue can be a part of the work but, fundamentally, the structural change is what matters.

Some documentary films using such top down change strategies have achieved great things on individual issues. After the release of *Blackfish*, for example, SeaWorld took a major hit in terms of attendance, reputation & market value but also triggered new legislative protections. *No Fire Zone* is credited with playing a key role in the United Nations' decision to set up an international inquiry into Sri Lankan war crimes.

However, if not handled carefully, a top down approach can manifest itself in impacts that are patronising and even disempowering. The caricature of an outsider parachuting in to make a film about the plight of a disadvantaged community, screening it in the seat of government to mass applause and then striding off into the sunset weighed down with plaudits, is coming under question from the perspective of the communities themselves – even if some substantive policy or legal change does result.

What emerges in opposition to this approach is bottom up change. So what does that look like?



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**“If there is any hope for the world at all, it does not live in climate-change conference rooms or in cities with tall buildings. It lives low down on the ground, with its arms around the people who go to battle everyday to protect their forests, their mountains and their rivers because they know that the forests, the mountains and the rivers protect them.”**

Arundhati Roy  
Writer & Activist



## Bottom up change

Bottom up thinking, by contrast, sees society as more of an organic system in which all issues are interlinked and fundamentally cannot be divided up. You might change one aspect of a system, but at the end of the day the system is resilient, and absorbs this change without fundamental shift. This analysis might, for example, be applied to the question of racial equality in the United States: arguably, rights enshrined in law have come a very long way and continue to head broadly in the right direction, yet the practical reality in the lives of real people lags far behind, with the direction of travel perhaps even heading in the wrong direction.

Instead of seeking to change structures at policy level, the fullest version of bottom up change seeks instead to work at the level of relationships between the very people and communities most affected by the issue in question, building power at that level. The fundamental belief is that without these communities becoming stronger and understanding themselves better in their own right, no real change will ever be possible.

When Just Vision released *Budrus*, nonviolent resistance in the Palestinian territories was either invisible or seen as ineffectual. So, they worked closely with activists in the village of Budrus to tell their story in a way that could be used to inspire activists in Israel, Palestine, and the U.S. to recognise and support nonviolent approaches. As filmmaker Julia Bacha put it: “We’re operating at the level of changing social norms and behaviours.” The villagers used screening events to train and foster new relationships with organisers in other villages, and to inspire more women to get involved in the resistance. In so doing, *Budrus* was able to legitimise, strengthen and grow the nonviolent resistance movement.

In the context of bottom up working, the act of making a film (or other media) is often as important as who sees the film once made. Repeated studies have found that participating in the making of a media project is itself a powerful way for communities and their members to reflect on their own stories, and identify their own power and desire for change.

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**“Far too many progressives still focus on speaking to a consensus-seeking policy elite – one that privileges objectivity, data, and argument – instead of pushing their ideas out to a divided public that responds to values, images, and stories.”**

Jeff Chang  
Journalist & Author



### OPPOSING OR COMPLEMENTARY?

In some ways, then, there is a major divide between these two headline approaches to the question of how change happens in the world. But when the rubber hits the road, is there really a conflict between them? The short answer is that we don't think so.

That's not to say that this isn't an important distinction to be aware of – it is hugely important, and the work you do with your film is likely to be far more effective if you are. But the best examples we can think of, while coming more from one side than the other (as we'll explore later in the module, in the context of the four key Impact Dynamics of film that we've identified), actually bring these two approaches together.

### BOTTOM UP TO TOP DOWN

The film *American Promise* and its engagement campaigns explored racial equality with a theory of change primarily rooted in bottom up working. The filmmakers were the parents of one of the two subjects of the film and have since become significant figures in the ongoing debate around the issue of black male achievement and a locus of grassroots organising. The primary focus of the campaign around the film was partner screenings, working closely with partner organisations across the United States to raise the volume of debate, but more importantly to build the capacity, profile and community of the partner organisations.

But to depict *American Promise* purely as a bottom up project would clearly be false. The film also screened on Capitol Hill, and sought directly to influence the policy

environment for black male achievement. The approach was to focus primarily on building the community from within as the single most important intervention in the complex system of factors inhibiting black male achievement – but with a clear understanding that the structural context of society is another valid place for intervention, and an important one at that.

Similarly, the film *9.70* was a bottom up campaign that nonetheless also focused on policy change. The film was developed in response to a brewing movement of farmworkers in Colombia who were protesting new trade agreement rules that impeded their ability to store seed from their own harvest as they had done for generations. The film's impact campaign focused on raising awareness about the new ruling, which was undermining food sovereignty across the country. The filmmakers armed farmworkers with *9.70* and worked with them to raise the visibility of their concerns to broader audiences and to grow their movement. Soon, protesters across the country were using the film as a convening tool and, almost overnight, activists started sharing the YouTube link as a way of communicating why the farmers were protesting.

But, ultimately, the filmmakers' goals were to repeal resolution 9.70. This meant also engaging policymakers and targeting the mainstream media. So, they appealed to farmers who were negotiating with the government to get the law onto the negotiating table. When their voices were blacked out by the mainstream media, they used the YouTube platform, where they had built a solid audience base, to correct misinformation and provide their followers with the tools they needed to defend them and keep the debate alive until, ultimately, mainstream outlets

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were forced to give them meaningful airtime. And finally, 20 days after releasing their film, the government was forced to repeal Resolution 9.70.

### TOP DOWN TO BOTTOM UP

Similarly, at first glance, *The Invisible War* is a classic example of a top down approach to change. The team focused ruthlessly on getting key individuals, holding key positions of power over military and government policy, to see the film – often with direct personal contact. Raising public awareness was a major part of the campaign, but framed entirely as instrumental to the desired political and legal changes.

But just as *American Promise* used top down approaches, the campaign around *The Invisible War* has vital bottom up elements. The film has become a key convening tool in the formation of a national community of survivors, the Artemis Rising Invisible War Recovery Program, and over \$1m has been raised to support the development of programmes supporting and empowering this community to tell their own stories. Legal and political changes have been achieved, but it is this work that will develop the community that ensures change will continue to push forward.

TO FIND OUT MORE HOW *BUDRUS*,  
*AMERICAN PROMISE* AND *THE  
INVISIBLE WAR* MADE IMPACT, READ  
THEIR CASE STUDIES IN THE **LIBRARY**



### Our conclusion

We believe these two case studies hint at the bigger truth here – that there are many different ways of working for change. Which is appropriate to a particular film project is less a question of right and wrong, and more a question of which and when. The important thing is to be aware of these issues, and to approach all this work with both humility and commitment.

**“When you look at potential shifts like the desperate need to democratise the world’s governments, the work takes much, much longer. Great perseverance is needed. So the culture of thinking that good environmental or social intervention can happen in short cycles and the current obsession with wanting organisations to prove they are having an immediate impact, is misleading.”**

Kumi Naidoo

Secretary General, Amnesty International

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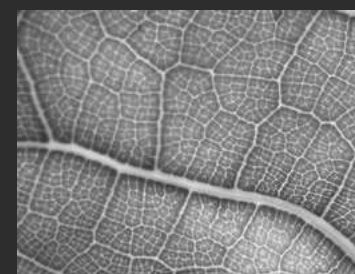
# Geek out

## Further reading

### 1.3 + 1.4

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#### 1.3 UNDERSTAND THE STORY ENVIRONMENT



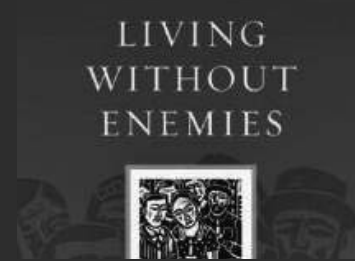
##### The HORTICULTURE model by Active Voice Lab

[hactivevoice.net/how-do-we-know/home/horticulture-tools/](http://hactivevoice.net/how-do-we-know/home/horticulture-tools/)

The HORTICULTURE model by Active Voice Lab helps you figure out what kind of tool you need for the issue environment or kind of impact you hope to have, or it helps you identify what the possible strengths are of the documentary/tool you've created.

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#### 1.4 TOP DOWN OR BOTTOM UP?



##### Living Without Enemies

[amazon.com/Living-Without-Enemies-Resources-Reconciliation/dp/0830834567](http://amazon.com/Living-Without-Enemies-Resources-Reconciliation/dp/0830834567)

Samuel Wells and Marcia A Owen provide a compelling exploration of how change happens from the perspective of a visiting white English priest and a member of his

congregation in the community of Durham, North Carolina – a city torn apart by deeply rooted inequality, with all the attendant issues of drugs and guns.

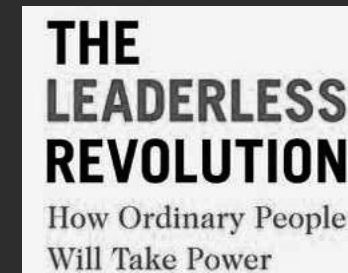


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##### Anarchists in the Boardroom

[morelikepeople.org/the-book/](http://morelikepeople.org/the-book/)

Liam Barrington-Bush wrote a management book for organisation and campaign strategy written from a bottom-up perspective – focusing explicitly on how we can make organisations more like people rather than more like machines. [Watch Liam's introductory video](#) from when the book was in crowdfunding.



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##### The Leaderless Revolution: How Ordinary People Will Take Power and Change Politics in the 21st Century

[amazon.com/The-](http://amazon.com/The-Leaderless-Revolution-Ordinary-Politics/dp/0452298946)

[Leaderless-Revolution-Ordinary-Politics/dp/0452298946](http://amazon.com/The-Leaderless-Revolution-Ordinary-Politics/dp/0452298946)

Carne Ross explores the future of politics from the perspective of a senior Foreign Office diplomat who resigned in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion. His belief? That the Occupy movement, and others like it, will come to be seen as the beginning of a new way of doing politics. Watch him talking through his 9 principles for action in this new world or visit his Tumblr.



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##### Sandy Storyline

[sandystoryline.com](http://sandystoryline.com)

This cutting edge transmedia project which won the Tribeca Film Festival's Bombay

Sapphire Award in 2013. Gathering stories in a variety of different formats from people affected by Hurricane Sandy and involved in the subsequent Occupy Sandy movement, it's a brilliant example of how media-making can empower and enable communities, and the different forms in which 'documenting' can drive bottom up change.

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##### Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets! by Sasha Costanza-Chock

[mitpress.mit.edu/contributors/sasha-costanza-chock](http://mitpress.mit.edu/contributors/sasha-costanza-chock)

This book by Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets!*, take a look at the ins and outs of transmedia organising and media practices that have effectively been pursued by immigrant rights movements. These practices, the book argues, have tended to be cross-platform, participatory, and linked to action.

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##### Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community by Jossey-Bass / Kim Klein's Chardon Press

[joanminieri.com/index.html](http://joanminieri.com/index.html)

This is a resource for those trying to increase the civic participation of ordinary people. It offers tools, worksheets and guidelines, and insights on using technology to effectively build more powerful alliances and engagement.





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## THE CHALLENGE FOR FILM TEAMS

**B**alancing art, impact, money.

The ever increasing contribution of film to making positive change in society is exciting. But we shouldn't pretend it's uncomplicated. Any impact film project must constantly tread the line between the three competing imperatives of art, impact and money in order to achieve success and be sustainable for filmmakers.



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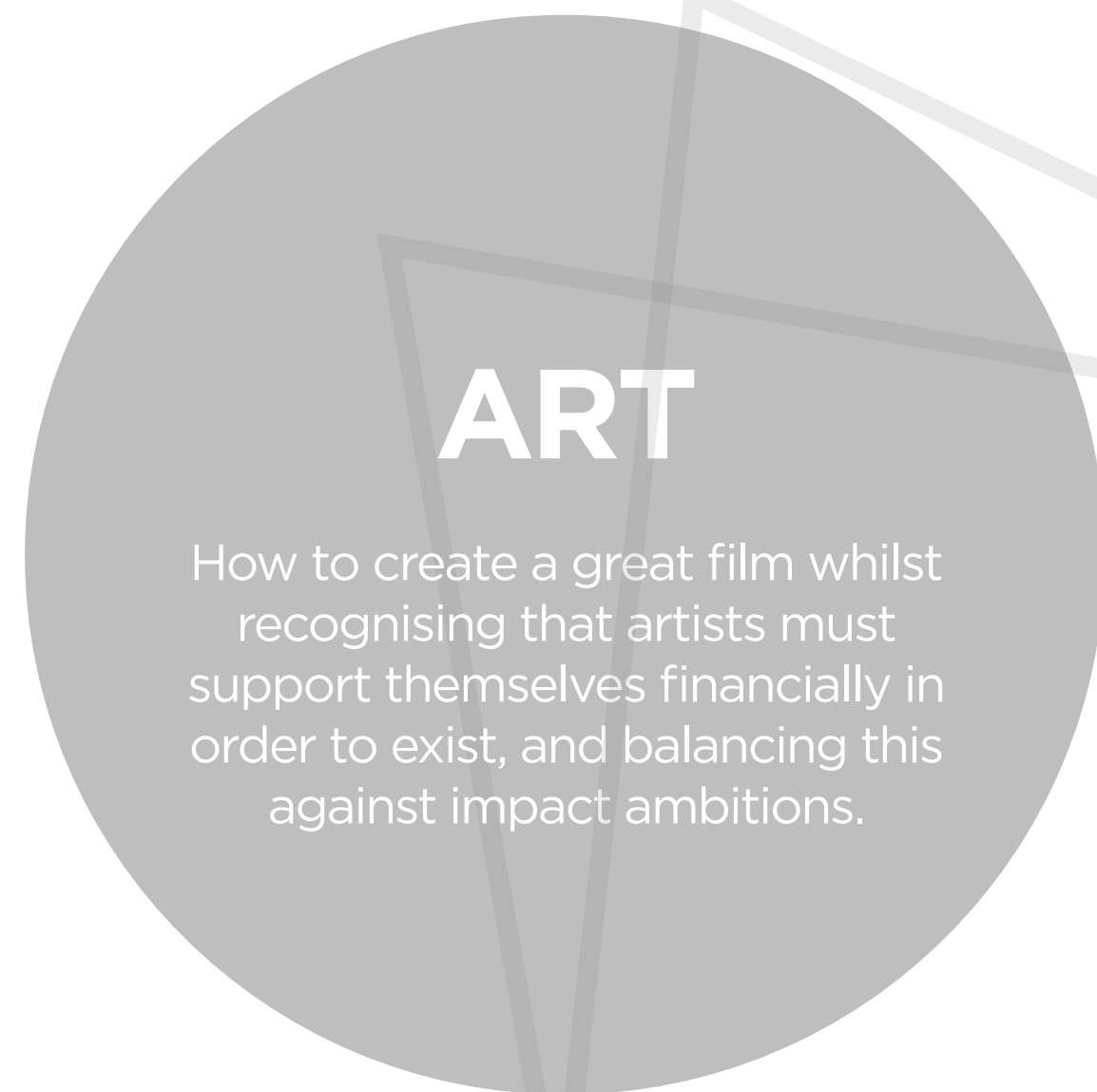
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**EVERYTHING IS ART**  
EVERYTHING IS POLITICS

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## HOLDING THE TENSIONS

There is no point in attempting to resolve these tensions simply by dispelling one or another of the three elements involved. The best results and happiest lives are achieved by figuring out where the best balance lies for each team on each project.

Noting that the director is the creative leader, without whom there would be no film to work with, but film teams also contain producers, financiers and impact professionals. They may all have different visions and priorities, so it's going to be key to get everyone on the same page with a shared vision.

## PAYING ATTENTION TO POWER

When developing a documentary campaign aimed at social and environmental justice, it is imperative to consider the dynamics of power that are embedded in your efforts from the start.

- How and from whom are resources, knowledge, and expertise being collected?
- To whom or to where are resources, knowledge, and expertise going?
- Who has authority/authorship/decision-making power and who does not?
- Who are the stakeholders in a project and are their voices and perspectives being fairly represented?
- Whose voices and perspectives are present; whose voices and perspectives are absent?

From the very start, it's a good idea to starting thinking about these questions and to map how power (financial, social, intellectual, emotional, labour, etc.) is being negotiated throughout your project.

**“This passion has all the ingredients of activism, but is charged with the wild creations of art. Artivism — where edges are pushed, imagination is freed, and a new language emerges altogether.”**

Eve Ensler, Playwright



**“Like all art, nonfiction film should invite, seduce, or force us to confront the most painful, mysterious or frightening aspects of what we are. This makes activism possible, but it is not the same as either activist journalism or activism itself.”**

Joshua Oppenheimer  
Filmmaker, *The Act of Killing*





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*Pussy Riot* filmmakers  
at Sundance



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# KNOW THYSELF

## RECOGNISING PRIORITIES

**N**ow that you've had a chance to explore the intersection of documentary and social change, it's a good time to evaluate what matters most to your team as it pulls in more collaborators.

Each of your priorities and passion may evolve over time, but understanding both will help you to recognise and respect where each person is coming from and where to focus your energy. This will help you to chart a course of action that best suits the goals for you as individuals and for the project. Then, when the pressure does come on, you'll have the foundation you need to work through it - a reminder of where and why you got started...

Of course, we all want all of the good things all of the time. It would be awesome to have a box office hit, all the awards, change communities and and and... but:



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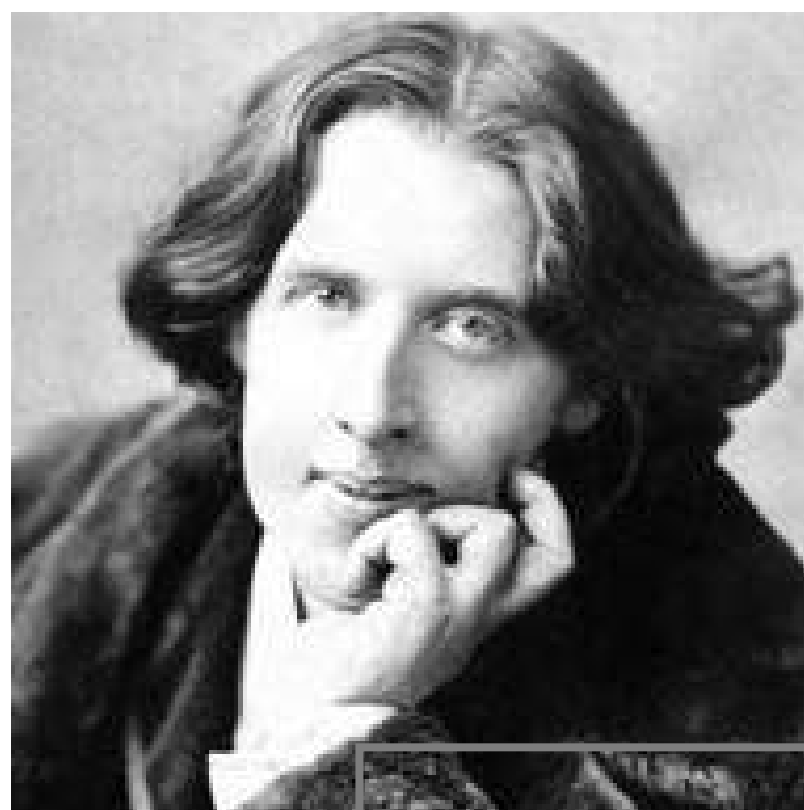
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**1.5 THE CHALLENGE FOR  
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**“Be yourself; everyone  
else is already taken.”**

Oscar Wilde  
Writer

What does success look like for you? Some filmmakers take an ideological position on public over private media. Others must prioritise making their money back, no matter how important the issue is to them. Only you and your team know what variables you are working with, so lay it all out in advance.

Reorganise the items below into your personal order. Get everyone in the team to do it. Then share your Top 3s – and discuss. There are no wrong answers.

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  
6.  
7.

**MAKING CONCRETE CHANGE**

Film helps on policy, law, public opinion, investigation, boycott etc

**TOUCHING LIVES**

Want my film to be super meaningful if only to a few people

**AUDIENCE SIZE**

Films seen by as many people as possible, no matter how they see them

**MAKING CINEMA** Getting wide theatrical distribution, so people can experience my film as cinema

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Each film needs to enable the next bigger and better film

**COMMERCIAL SUCCESS**

This is the film business after all

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Films get props they deserve from peers and industry (awards, reviews)



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Marc Silver & Gael García Bernal in the making of *Who Is Dayani Cristal*



📍 2.1 WHY VISION AND STRATEGY MATTER

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2.2 DEFINE YOUR VISION

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2.3 DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

---

2.4 MAP THE ISSUE

---

2.5 THE FOUR IMPACT DYNAMICS

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2.6 FILMMAKING AS EMANCIPATORY PRACTICE

---

2.7 DRAFT YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

---

# 2.0 PLANNING FOR IMPACT



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📍 2.1 WHY VISION AND STRATEGY MATTER

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2.7 DRAFT YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

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“Vision without action is only dreaming, action without vision is only passing time, vision with action can change the world”

Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa



## WHY VISION AND STRATEGY MATTER

In taking on any great challenge, defining the vision is the critical first step. It’s always there as your team’s lighthouse to guide the way. It rarely changes, because it’s the ultimate destination.

But vision alone is just the beginning — you also need to know how to steer the ship. That’s where your impact campaign strategy comes in. This is the plan of action to guide the journey. It will inevitably shift and change as you encounter new obstacles or opportunities.

The **planning** chapter will guide you through defining your vision and strategy, mapping an issue, identifying the type(s) of change you want to pursue, and drafting your plan with the help of our **Strategic Plan worksheet**.

To get the most out of this section, we suggest you explore the following four case studies from the **Library**.



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**BAG IT**

Inspired the plastic-free movement across America, community by community (2010)

Directed by Suzan Beraza

[DOWNLOAD](#)



**THE ACT OF KILLING**

Made the Indonesian genocide of the 1960s impossible to ignore (2012)

Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, co-directed by Christine Cynn and Anonymous

[DOWNLOAD](#)



**THE END OF THE LINE**

Put the decline of fish stocks on the global agenda for business, politics and the man on the street (2009)

Directed by Rupert Murray, produced by George Duffield & Christo Hird

[DOWNLOAD](#)



**THE AGE OF STUPID**

Triggered mass environmental behaviour change in the UK and beyond (2009)

Directed by Franny Armstrong, produced by Lizzie Gillett

[DOWNLOAD](#)



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# DEFINE YOUR VISION

As impact film teams, we are always holding a vision with two elements:

**The Art Vision:** the intrinsic vision for the film and *how it will be*

**The Impact Vision:** the extrinsic vision for what the film *will do*

**The Art Vision** must be understood and acknowledged as key to the success of the project as a whole — because without a great film, there is no impact. This is the director’s domain, along with their chosen creative collaborators.

**The Impact Vision** is an expression of the big change in the world that everyone involved can unite around, to sit alongside the Art Vision. It should be arrived at as a team. As discussed in the previous section, as individuals you need to know yourselves and your priorities. You also need to know how these relate to your broader vision and where other colleagues and the impacted communities you work with are coming from — you may be more different than you realise.

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## THE ART VISION

There is no fixed template - but it's helpful if it's under 30 words.

Joshua Oppenheimer has said this of his approach to *The Act of Killing*:

'*The Act of Killing* is a film about the dangers of denial, but in the escapist fantasy of the cinema... explor[ing] the way our seemingly factual realities are impregnated by fiction.'

Every director will have a different way of expressing it. Our advice is simply to take the time to ensure this comes first.

Every single person who joins the team needs to understand the Art Vision - the director's vision for the film she is trying to make. Once you've done that, you're ready to define an Impact Vision to hold alongside it. This is much more of a team exercise.

## THE IMPACT VISION

This is about making the time and space to have a big conversation as a team. Making a film might revolve around a director, but making impact is definitely a team sport. Everyone involved in the film and the impact project as a whole should be part of this exercise.

As a default output, we recommend you also aim for a statement of 30 words or less. But if that doesn't work for you, that's not a problem. You may wish to be more creative: make a mood board, maybe even a short edit.

What matters is that there is some output you can have at hand throughout the project, that everyone can call upon as a reminder of where you are going.

However it's expressed, what you're looking for is a vision that is:

- **Clear** - requiring little or no further explanation
- **Compelling** - inspiring in and of its own right, without needing to know you as a team
- **Outside the comfort zone** - not something that is immediately and obviously possible, but yet something that the team believes in at a stretch and with luck on your side
- **Available** - it must be in a format you can refer to easily and quickly at whatever stage in the process you come to

Use the conversation starters below to spark discussion with your film team. Vision is about bigger- picture thinking. Later sections will help you work out the details of the specific changes you might want to campaign for.

Examples to inspire:

—*Budrus*  
**Make nonviolence the strategy of choice in Israel-Palestine**

—*The End of The Line*  
**Create more sustainable fisheries**

—*Bag It*  
**Make America plastic-free, one community at a time**

—*The Age of Stupid*  
**Trigger a mass movement of environmental behaviour change**





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Conversation starters in your own team for your own project:

Why are you involved as individuals in this project, and what got you engaged in the first place?

What aspects of this change work do you care most deeply about?

What would you change if you could change literally anything?

Thinking about your film and what you have learnt about the issue environment, what will count as success for you?

Ideally you'll then vet your vision statement and your plan with external stakeholders as well, from impacted community members to NGO leaders. That's where a braintrust gathering can be helpful. We'll discuss this more in [Section 2.4](#).

Want to dig a little deeper into this one? Here are a couple of great free resources - there'll be more to come in the [Library](#) as we release more modules, and we'd love to hear your suggestions too.

#### GEEK OUT

IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### DEFINE YOUR VISION

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##### How Great Leaders Inspire Action

[ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action](https://ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action)

Simon Sinek's TED talk is one of the most watched of all time, with nearly 20 million views. Guess what? It's all about clarity of vision.



##### Steve Radcliffe's Future-Engage-Deliver Model

[futureengagedeliver.com/fed-free-resources/](https://futureengagedeliver.com/fed-free-resources/)

Radcliffe is one of the simplest and most direct — as well as highly regarded — leadership thinkers in the world. His notion of defining the future you are leading for has helped inform our thinking, and there's some great free resources on the website.



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## DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

In the first chapter, we covered why documentary film in general is such a powerful impact medium – because it deepens understanding & empathy, sparks new connections and brings energy to an issue; because it contributes to culture change, which bolsters (and is reinforced by) other change; because in independent documentary, we have a unique flexibility to reach audiences that matter.

Now we need to make a start on how your specific project is going to build on those properties to deliver real, practical impact on the issue you're facing. What this planning looks like often depends on your starting point.

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**A film impact strategy must be constructed around the interplay between what a movement or activists need and a film’s strengths. For example:**

- Who can the film most effectively engage with?
- What is this audience likely to already think about the issue?
- What’s the issue landscape like (current events, public discourse, policy debates, etc.)?
- What do campaigners working in this issue landscape need?
- What are the possible “pressure points” that the story can trigger?
- What would the target audiences need to do in order for real change to happen?

### IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT IS YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE?

Even if you have a clear sense of the issues your film addresses, when a story is emergent it may be unclear where things will end up and/or what the film’s strengths will be. And even when you think you know what your story is about, that may not be what your target audiences take away from it. So, if impact is a priority for you, work with your partners and advisers to make sure you’re moving forward with eyes wide open.

And while that’s true of all films to one degree or another, there are some filmmakers who embed deeply in an issue and stay with it long-term. This means that their storytelling is somewhat more issue-driven and the impact strategy, while rarely fixed, is much more stable (often tied to a theory of change) and built into the production from the start.

**Exposures Lab**, for example, has developed a deep expertise around climate change. **Skylight Pictures** often focus on human rights in Central America. And **Just Vision**’s mission is to bring peace to the conflict in Israel-Palestine. For these teams who have been embedded in their respective movements - in some cases for decades - the story they choose to tell is the story the movement needs.

Julia Bacha from Just Films explained that their team is on the ground in Israel-Palestine year-round, listening for the stories and opportunities that could move the meter on the conflict. When they made *Budrus*, they knew they needed a story that could counteract the narrative that nonviolence doesn’t work. Their theory of change was that, by elevating stories of nonviolent resistance which were largely buried in popular media, they would inspire more people to resist nonviolently.

But these folks are unusual. Most typically, filmmakers are compelled or drawn to make an issue-driven film, but then move on. And that is fine. No matter where a filmmaker and their team is coming from, the end result can be breathtakingly powerful.

There are many ways to build a strategic plan. Whether it’s built in from the start or emergent, there are nonetheless a few basics to keep in mind. Here we offer a case study and a tool to help you get started with your planning.

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**The Strategic Plan worksheet:** effectively a roadmap-builder to take you from your film to the Impact Vision you defined.

**DOWNLOAD**  
STRATEGIC PLAN WORKSHEET

**And feel free to riff off this.** Using the Field Guide, Impact Producer Ani Mercedes has devised her own working process to help get started at the very beginning. For any film she's working on, she will:

- 1. Write down the key themes and messages from the film.** She includes any issues, topics, or pronouns specific to it.
- 2. Create an impact hypothesis.** What issues might the film move the needle on? She brainstorms 2-3 hypotheses based on the themes she wrote down. Note: after you brainstorm, it's helpful to refine your hypothesis so it starts with a verb (i.e. encourage) and include who it could move the needle for (i.e. underrepresented groups).
- 3. Brainstorm activities.** What can the audience do after watching the film? She then brainstorms activities with the team around what things people could do to accomplish each of her impact hypotheses. (ie: volunteer, register to vote, change their purchasing decisions)

**4. List partners.** She then identifies 100-200 potential partners who may be able to use the film as a tool to strengthen their own work or who are already helping people do some of the activities listed. Remember to categorise and prioritise them.

Having completed this initial analysis, Ani's next steps are to create a simple one to two page pitch outlining this thinking, which she uses in her initial outreach to potential partners. Eventually, she will host a braintrust to bring those stakeholders together and test that working hypothesis in person, making it richer. (More about running a braintrust in the next section.)

Now, any strategic plan is likely to evolve throughout the process of making the film — especially if you're not yet certain of the story arc — but you've got to start somewhere.

In the sections that follow, we'll walk you through the process of developing your first working draft:

- Map the Issue
- Introducing the Four Impact Dynamics
- Drafting your Impact Plan: a how to guide

We will return to the Impact Evaluation Plan worksheet in **Measuring Impact**.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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MY STRATEGIC PLAN

NAME OF FILM:

IMPACT VISION:

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
That audiences take away from the film	Concrete solution that your project could aim for	Who can make this happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing minds</li> <li>• Changing behaviours</li> <li>• Building communities</li> <li>• Changing structures</li> </ul>	What needs to happen with your film/campaign to make the agent deliver

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STRATEGIC PLAN WORKSHEET





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MY EVALUATION PLAN

NAME OF FILM:

IMPACT VISION:

<b>IMPACT GOAL</b> From your Strategic Plan above	<b>IMPACT INDICATOR</b> evidence you have been successful	<b>TOOL/TECHNIQUE</b> For capturing the evidence	<b>BASE LINE</b> Any relevant data from before release you can measure against	<b>DATE 1/2/3/4</b> Evidence collected over time to reveal patterns of change

**DOWNLOAD**  
EVALUATION PLAN

[2.1 WHY VISION AND STRATEGY MATTER](#)[2.2 DEFINE YOUR VISION](#)[📍 2.3 DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY](#)[2.4 MAP THE ISSUE](#)[2.5 THE FOUR IMPACT DYNAMICS](#)[2.6 FILMMAKING AS EMANCIPATORY PRACTICE](#)[2.7 DRAFT YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN](#)**CHANGING STRUCTURES: THE END OF THE LINE****IMPACT VISION:** SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL FISHING**PRIMARY IMPACT DYNAMIC:** CHANGING STRUCTURES

The core insight is that change will come when businesses can bring this issue to the attention of people, by choice editing and making public claims about the shifts they undertake.

**IMPACT PLAN (Actual, but tailored slightly)**Other Films: *Give Up Tomorrow, Invisible War, The Reckoning*

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
Large companies are making profit at nature's expense, and restaurants are irresponsible	Change corporate policies - from big corporate suppliers to small restaurants	CEOs, restaurant and shop owners	Changing structures	Develop corporate partnerships with responsible retailers (e.g. Waitrose as distribution partner) Get high profile CEOs to make public commitment to sustainable fish sourcing (e.g. Pret a Manger)
You can ask for sustainable fish and help solve the problem	Get everyone asking for sustainable fish	Shoppers, restaurant goers	Changing behaviours	Create tools and lists of sustainable fish Create a 'buy sustainable fish' pledge Integrate pledge into content of film
There is global overfishing but no one knows	Raise awareness of overfishing	Mass public	Changing minds	Maximise press coverage of issue (not necessarily driving people to film - issue awareness matters more than audience numbers) Liaise with production companies and campaigners to trigger further content and mobilisation campaigns
European fishery policy is a mess	Drive policy innovation including creation of marine reserves	UK/EU politicians, wealthy individuals	Changing structures	Get politicians and wealthy individuals to see the film

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STRATEGIC PLAN WORKSHEET



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SAMPLE EVALUATION PLAN  
THE END OF THE LINE

IMPACT GOAL From your Strategic Plan above	IMPACT INDICATOR evidence you have been successful	TOOL/TECHNIQUE For capturing the evidence	BASE LINE Any relevant data from before release you can measure against	DATE 1/2/3/4 Evidence collected over time to reveal patterns of change
Change in policy towards sustainable fish in corporates from global suppliers to small restaurants	Number of relevant corporates who have seen the film  Qualitative response of corporates  Number of corporates taken action	*Press releases from corporates.  *Quotes from speeches.  *Commentary in Annual Reviews.  *Monitoring Budget changes  *Monitoring release of new data		
Get the general public asking for sustainable fish	* Change in purchasing behavior associated with the films campaign  *Claimed likelihood to demand sustainable fish amongst viewers of the film as well as the general public  *Social media/press discussion of problem of overfishing  *Increase in requests for information or for referrals to services associated with the film campaign	*Commission press evaluation & sentiment analysis to show frame change in the media  * For behavioural change in your target groups, commission qualitative surveying with focus groups and repeat with same sample after 12 months to track longitudinal behaviour change  * For evidence of population change commission a quantative survey before films release and repeat after a period for comparison		

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EVALUATION PLAN



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# Geek out

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#### DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

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##### Center for Theory of Change

[theoryofchange.org](http://theoryofchange.org)

Developing your strategy is fundamentally about figuring out how you think the causal chain from your film to change in the world could work. The Center for Theory of Change is a US non-profit founded to support this sort of work – there’s some great resources on their website.

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##### Theory of Change DIY Toolkit

[diytoolkit.org/tools/theory-of-change](http://diytoolkit.org/tools/theory-of-change)

The Development Impact & You (DIY) Toolkit has been an inspiration for us in preparing the modules. The context is development-specific, but their theory of change tool, and particularly the film explaining it, is a great resource.

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##### Harmony Institute – StoryPilot

[harmonylabs.org/storypilot](http://harmonylabs.org/storypilot)

Get to know the landscape of films relating to your particular issue before reinventing the wheel. StoryPilot provides an online interactive solar system linking the orbits for hundreds of films and their social impact.

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##### The Center for Story-based Strategy

[storybasedstrategy.org/tools-and-resources](http://storybasedstrategy.org/tools-and-resources)

The Center for Story-based Strategy also has a suite of resources you can use to develop your, well: Story Based Strategy!



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## MAP THE ISSUE

The first step is to get to know the key organisations in your issue environment. Some of this has likely been done already as a natural part of the filmmaking process. But this is the time to find out what those organisations' strategic priorities are, which will likely inform your impact planning process and allow you to proceed in your efforts responsibly and with accountability.

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First up, start thinking about all the key stakeholders who are working to solve the social problem that a film addresses. For example:

- **COMMUNITIES REPRESENTED IN THE FILM**
- **EXPERTS AND ACADEMICS**
- **BRANDS AND COMPANIES**
- **CAMPAIGNERS AND ADVOCATES**
- **FUNDERS AND PHILANTHROPISTS**
- **POLITICIANS AND POLICY MAKERS**
- **PRESS AND MEDIA**
- **MESSAGING AND FRAMING EXPERTS**
- **NGOs - SMALL** (highly aligned)
- **NGOs - LARGE** (with resources)
- **PUBLIC FIGURES**

**TIP:** Create a database now that tracks everyone in your film/campaign world and code them by organisation type and issue interest:

(L) - already a sympathetic Leader in the issue  
(T) - they are a Target of engagement

Share it with your team and then brainstorm some more.

On the next page is an example from *The End of the Line*, with some questions to help prompt you.

Beyond this mapping exercise, it could be useful to attend conferences & public debates. Think Tanks and universities hold public events all the time, and there's more than likely to be events that are relevant to the issue you're digging into. Get yourself there. It's a chance to hear from the field and identify aligned partners.

Review similar films to see what is out there that's related to what you're trying to do, and find out everything you can about the projects. Other film teams will probably let you stand on their shoulders. Ask them.

Then, armed with that list, think about who you want to prioritise to develop relationships with. This is hugely important in change work. Who could be your advisors, your council, your friendly critic from inside the issue movement?

**“Mediamakers often think they are starting a movement but haven't checked to see if there already is a movement”**

Sasha Costanza-Chock  
Academic & Activist



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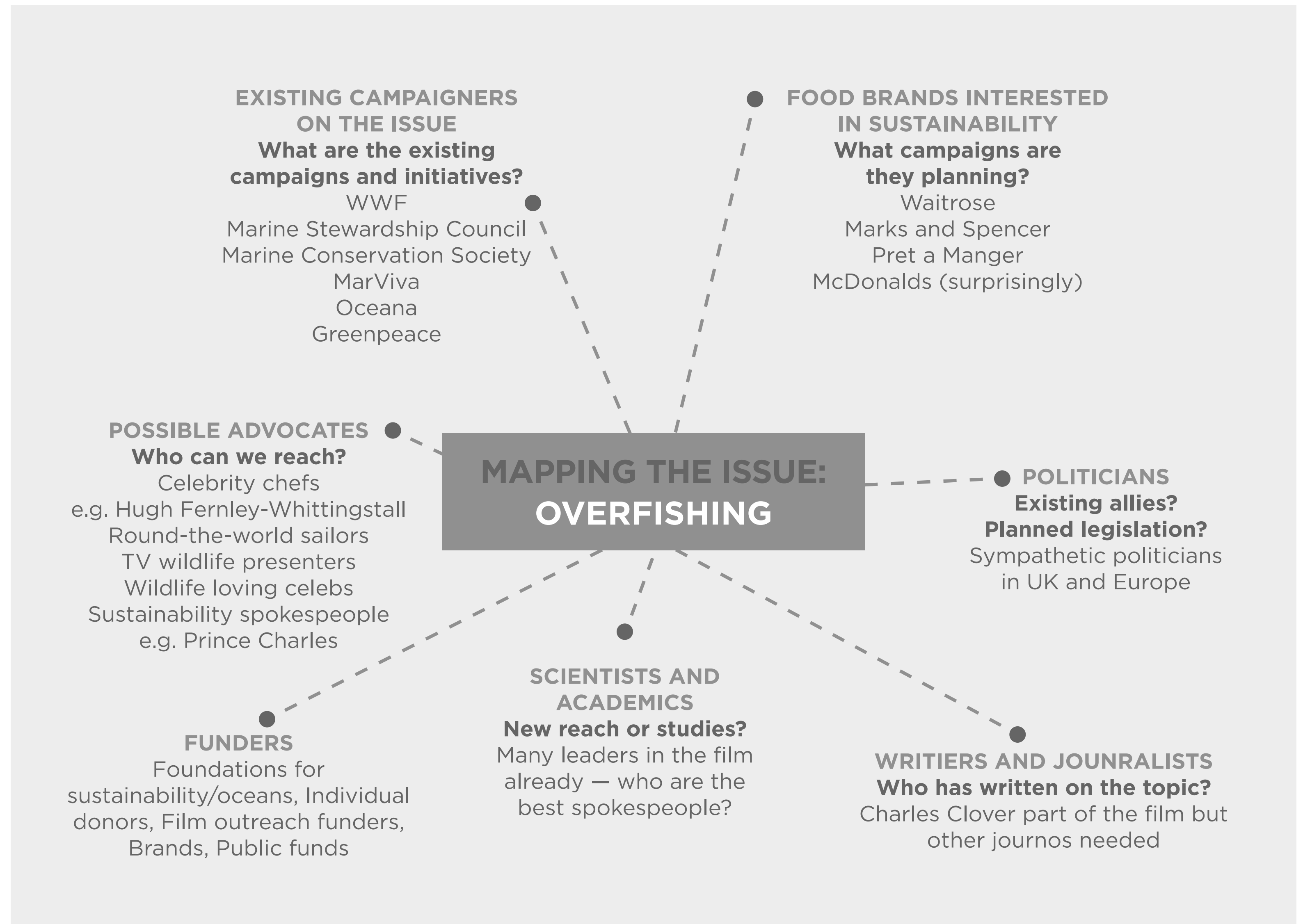
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## BRAINTRUST

Often, at this stage, an impact film team will pull together a braintrust to accelerate the process. A braintrust is a gathering that brings together people and organisations who are working on the problems your film addresses, so that they can offer their perspectives on your film and your early impact plans. It is often a 3-4 hour meeting that involves a screening of the entire film, or parts of it, followed by a structured conversation.

But not all braintrusts are the same. Some are cross-sector and aim to tap into the collective wisdom of people who are working on the issue from varied angles. Other braintrusts target key sectors or groups and aim to seed interest and buy-in to the project. And yet others aim to highlight the possibilities and inspire key leaders and funders to get involved in some way. Some are national in scope and others are hyper-local. Some gather feedback to help them finalise the film, while others help refine the campaign strategy.

Whatever you aim to do, remember: who you invite to a braintrust and how you structure your meeting will shape what you get out of it. So be thoughtful in your planning.

Here is one example of a simple structure, which DocSociety has offered to filmmakers in the past. Use it as a helpful starting point to your braintrust planning, but be sure to tailor it to your needs.

## BEFORE THE MEETING

- Solidify the meeting objectives and agenda well in advance
- Put together an invite list that includes sectors, stakeholders, and the perspectives needed
- Plan ahead to address accessibility issues and financial barriers for participants
- Nominate a note taker from your film team to capture the discussion
- Nominate a chairperson from your team to run the meeting

## AT THE MEETING

1. Introduce the agenda for the day and the purpose of the meeting. For example:
  - To share more information about the film and impact campaign in order to recruit partners
  - To gather feedback on the film's impact potential as you finalise production
  - To gather feedback on the campaign objectives and activities as you start planning
2. Share context for the film and your impact campaign. Highlight the unique opportunity presented by the release of the film. For example:
  - The visibility it will gain through theatrical or broadcast distribution moments
  - The film's ability to communicate themes of relevance to them and their audiences
  - Any tools, support, or other perks of partnership

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3. Screen the full film or key scenes from the film. Be sure to make time after the screening for the room to react candidly before digging into planning. Often, the richest feedback comes in this moment.

4. Share the production timeline and distribution plans, then gather feedback and comments about how these might line up with their own calendars and interests. For example:

- When do you expect to be finished?
- How do you plan to release the film?
- What are the main campaign milestones?
- What are the different ways partners could work with the film at different times?

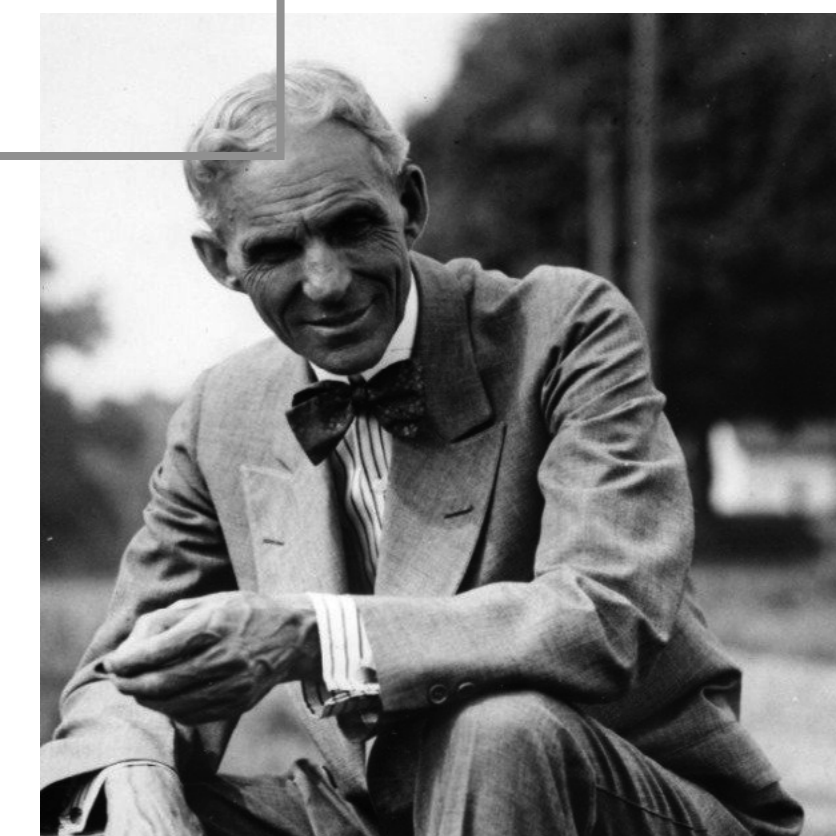
5. Facilitate a group brainstorm geared toward your braintrust objectives. For example, if your intent is to identify the various ways the film might be able to serve the movement or partners, then be sure to discuss:

- The audiences or constituencies needed for real impact to occur
- How best to direct those audiences or constituencies
- Those who are missing among potential campaign partners (be sure to ask for intros)
- The support you already have and the support you need, e.g.: funding, legal, research, networks, campaign expertise etc.

6. DON'T LEAVE THE ROOM WITHOUT making concrete next steps for follow up. Gather feedback on the best way to maintain communication and collaboration after the meeting.

**“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”**

Henry Ford





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Jule Hall from *College Behind Bars* at Good Pitch New York



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## INTRODUCING THE FOUR IMPACT DYNAMICS

**N**ow let's look at the *kinds* of change that film can drive: what we call **IMPACT DYNAMICS**. These are based on extensive analysis of the films we've worked with, but also from working with a variety of NGOs and activists to understand the different kinds of change efforts that they work with.

Here are the four Impact Dynamics, with example Impact Plans over the next few pages to help you.

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## Changing minds:

Mass awareness and understanding – creating a shift in public attitudes. What attitudes and beliefs are you trying to create or change?

Changing minds is about building awareness of an issue or shifting how it is perceived. It's about deepening understanding and connecting the dots between personal experiences and on-screen depictions. It can be broad (i.e. changing broad public discourse) or it can be more focused.

*The Act of Killing* was primarily a changing minds impact project: driving a radical reappraisal of the Indonesian nation's attitudes and beliefs regarding the genocide of 1965-66. A key part of *Chasing Ice*'s impact campaign was focused on changing one mind, that of Congressman Tiberi, in Ohio. And with 90+ screenings and a coalition of local partners putting pressure on him, they were finally able to get this former climate-denier to acknowledge the need to work together to address climate change.

While it may be tempting to imagine that changing hearts and minds is something that every social problem needs, film teams that care about true impact should beware that sometimes, positioning empathy and humanisation as the end goal will only result in superficial change. Sonya Childress of Firelight Media, in her Medium article “Beyond Empathy,” warns that:

*While a change in perception is important, and, certainly the first step towards behavioural change, the overemphasis on attitudinal change towards individuals leaves less room for films that push audiences to grapple with the structures and systems that reinforce inequality.*

Would you like to know more? You can read Sonya's article [here](#).

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



Filmstill: *The Act of Killing*

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## Changing behaviours:

Actively mobilising people to do different not just think different, whether that's to buy or boycott, donate or volunteer. What specific actions could you promote?

*The Age of Stupid* and the **10:10 campaign** (now known as **Possible**) sought to change behaviours, seeking to trigger a mass public movement of small environmental actions in everyday life. Ten years later, the campaign was still going strong - promoting positive, practical projects focused on tackling climate change at community level, and turning these local actions into a force for bigger changes. From a solar schools campaign to research into building solar powered railways and fighting the ban on onshore wind, everything they do is about inspiring more people to take more action on climate change.

The *Virunga* campaign encouraged audiences to check their own investments and pensions funds. If they had investment in SOCO, audiences were asked to write to the company and ask them if they intended to make an absolute commitment not to explore in Virunga National Park, and to commit to an exit plan that properly safeguarded the area. SOCO shareholders were a key audience, and the campaign encouraged them to positively engage with the company and to encourage it to carry out an adequate, independent investigation into all allegations of wrongdoing, to account for their lack of oversight whilst operating in the DRC. The campaign also encouraged the public to donate to the national park in the Congo - this being the most direct way to support the park and its rangers.



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## Building communities:

Grassroots organising – providing the focal point around which people come together. What communities could you serve or support?

*Bag It* focused primarily on building communities, positioning the film as a key tool around which individuals and organisations across America could campaign for voluntary or legislative plastic bag bans.

The Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement used *Budrus* to validate this important and effective, but largely unseen, movement. They used the film to highlight the voices and perspectives of these organisers and as a convening tool to inspire and build this important base.



Filmstill: *Bag It*



Filmstill: *Budrus*



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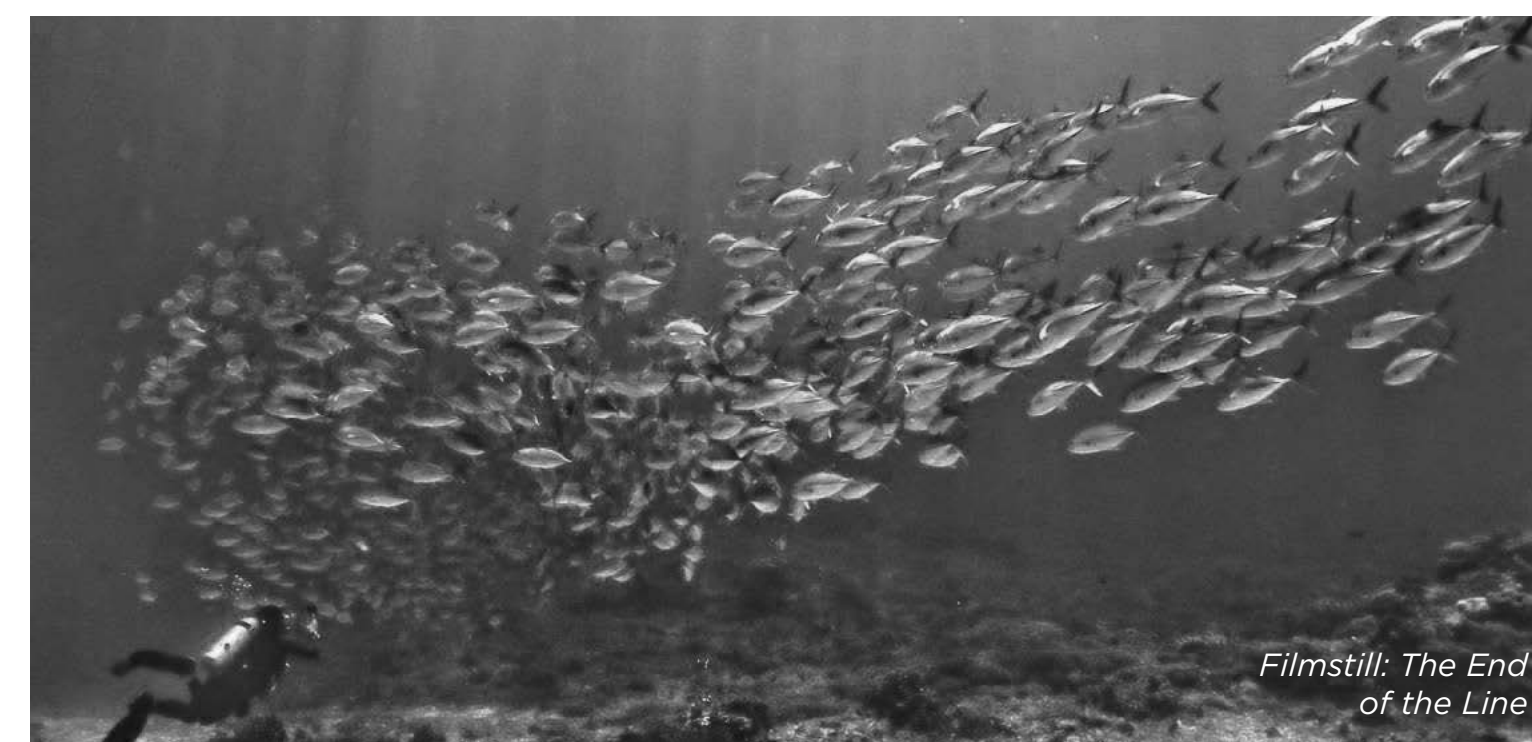
## Changing structures:

Whether in politics or business, directly influencing law and policy to change the context. What laws or policies embed the problem you are trying to solve?

*The End of the Line* became primarily a changing structures film, focusing on influencing corporate leaders to make changes around (in this case) the fish they purchase, how it is marketed, and create a new context for their customers.

*No Fire Zone* focused on influencing members of the UN Human Rights Council which would lead to a vote on investigating war crimes during the long conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers.

The *Please Remember Me* campaign, named “Memory 2030”, aimed to help families grappling with Alzheimer’s and dementia in China. One partner, an Alzheimer’s doctor, started using the film as a training tool among his staff to shift hospital culture and attitudes towards these patients. Local government launched new plans for dementia care including extra beds, and ended up endorsing the campaign and using the trailer to promote the new program.



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### Other Strategic Plans:

**CHANGING MINDS: *The Act of Killing***

**CHANGING BEHAVIOURS: *The Age of Stupid***

**BUILDING COMMUNITIES: *Bag It***

**CHANGING STRUCTURES: *The End of the Line***

THE IMPACT

# FIELD GUIDE

& TOOLKIT

*From Art to Impact*

### CHANGING MINDS: *THE ACT OF KILLING*

**IMPACT VISION:** A FRESH START FOR INDONESIA

**PRIMARY IMPACT DYNAMIC:** CHANGE MINDS

The team hoped to catalyse a fundamental change in how the 1965-66 genocide is understood in Indonesia and internationally, exposing how the present day climate of impunity and corruption is built on the celebration of mass murder by victorious perpetrators.

### IMPACT PLAN (Hypothetical)

Other Films: *Bully, Gasland*

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
The accepted story is false - genocide was real, and the perpetrators are in power	Generate nationwide critical discussion	The Indonesian public	Changing minds	Ensure film widely seen despite inevitable political censorship - partner with civil society organisations to arrange invite only screenings across country
The international community has been complicit	Generate critical discussion around the world about role of own countries	US and other Western publics	Changing minds	Ensure film not seen just as external criticism of Indonesia - highlight implicit support of World Bank etc
Indonesian politics is still deeply tainted	Support movement for truth and reconciliation processes	Indonesian government and international community	Changing structures	Partner with Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission to support creation of full report into genocide in parallel with film release Support wider civil society movement Create channels for international pressure on Indonesian government



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BUILDING COMMUNITIES: *Bag It*

CHANGING STRUCTURES: *The End of the Line*



CHANGING BEHAVIOURS: *THE AGE OF STUPID*

**IMPACT VISION:** TRIGGER A MASS MOVEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

**PRIMARY IMPACT DYNAMIC:** CHANGE BEHAVIOURS

The aim was to turn 250 million viewers into climate activists - changing their own behaviour first and foremost and making a public commitment to do so.

**IMPACT PLAN (Hypothetical)**

Other Films: *Weapon of War*

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
Every individual can do something against climate change	Mobilise 250m viewers as climate activists	Everyone - but with a focus on influential individuals in personal capacity	Changing behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with NGOs to provide guidance on individual actions via Not Stupid and then 10:10 campaigns (Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Global Campaign on Climate Action)</li> <li>Provide public commitment process (10:10) so people can show what they are doing Recruit influential individuals - Colin Firth, Vivienne Westwood, political party leaders</li> </ul>
It's more effective if we do it together	Mobilise in existing groups (schools, businesses, etc)	All groups - but focus on schools and influential groups who will be copied	Building communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with NGO (ActionAid) to create schools pack</li> <li>Get influential organisations to lead the way and communicate on to their competitors/supporters/customers - Tottenham Hotspur FC, UK Government, Science Museum</li> </ul>



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**BUILDING COMMUNITIES: BAG IT**

**IMPACT VISION:** A PLASTIC-FREE AMERICA

**PRIMARY IMPACT DYNAMIC:** BUILD COMMUNITIES

Identify communities interested in working towards voluntary or legislative bans on plastic bags, and support them.

**IMPACT PLAN (Hypothetical)**

Other Films: *Budrus, The Interrupters*

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
The removal of single use plastic bags will happen one town at a time	Enable and focus communities across the US on banning plastic bags	Community leaders	Building Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit established environmental policy expert as Policy Director at outset</li> <li>Focus organising efforts on 'Bag It Town Campaign'</li> <li>Prioritise community screenings over cinematic release</li> <li>Focus on schools as key route into communities</li> </ul>
Only established environmentalists understand the problem - but this is something for everyone	Get public awareness of the problems caused by plastic beyond the choir	Mass public	Changing Minds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus filmmaking on an 'everyman' story - not a usual suspect</li> <li>Stay fun, accessible and empowering throughout film and impact campaign</li> <li>Bag Monsters as one way to do this</li> </ul>
Everyone can do something by using less plastic	Give individuals a clear action: reduce single- use plastics	Mass public	Changing Behaviours	Provide public pledge mechanic



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BUILDING COMMUNITIES: *Bag It*

CHANGING STRUCTURES: *The End of the Line*



CHANGING STRUCTURES: *THE END OF THE LINE*

IMPACT VISION: SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL FISHING  
PRIMARY IMPACT DYNAMIC: CHANGING STRUCTURES

The core insight is that change will come when businesses can bring this issue to the attention of people, by choice editing and making public claims about the shifts they undertake.

IMPACT PLAN (Actual, but tailored slightly)  
Other Films: *Give Up Tomorrow, Invisible War, The Reckoning*

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
Large companies are making profit at nature's expense, and restaurants are irresponsible	Change corporate policies - from big corporate suppliers to small restaurants	CEOs, restaurant and shop owners	Changing structures	Develop corporate partnerships with responsible retailers (e.g. Waitrose as distribution partner) Get high profile CEOs to make public commitment to sustainable fish sourcing (e.g. Pret a Manger)
You can ask for sustainable fish and help solve the problem	Get everyone asking for sustainable fish	Shoppers, restaurant goers	Changing behaviours	Create tools and lists of sustainable fish Create a 'buy sustainable fish' pledge Integrate pledge into content of film
There is global overfishing but no one knows	Raise awareness of overfishing	Mass public	Changing minds	Maximise press coverage of issue (not necessarily driving people to film - issue awareness matters more than audience numbers) Liaise with production companies and campaigners to trigger further content and mobilisation campaigns
European fishery policy is a mess	Drive policy innovation including creation of marine reserves	UK/EU politicians, wealthy individuals	Changing structures	Get politicians and wealthy individuals to see the film



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### DEPLOYING MULTIPLE IMPACT DYNAMICS

Having distinguished the different kinds of change that a film can contribute to, as you can see from the **sample Strategic Plans**, every project we know has used at least two. And if you take a film like *Chasing Coral* as another example, it held all 4 of the impact dynamics in its impact campaign:

#### CHANGING MINDS:

The film offers time-lapse evidence of dying coral reefs. They leveraged community screenings (1500+ in 100+ countries in a one-year period) and a robust marketing, PR and social media strategy to build media buzz (5k press mentions + awards and nominations) and “Wake Up the World” about the impact of climate change on corals.

#### BUILDING COMMUNITY:

The campaign used the film to build a local community in South Carolina and Georgia around sustainability and climate solutions. It also networked a global community of active and engaged coral reef supporters. For example, the “50 Reefs Initiative” encouraged divers to check on the coral reefs near them and advocate on their behalf.

#### CHANGING STRUCTURES:

The team launched a successful hyperlocal campaign to pressure South Carolina’s elected leaders to support clean energy (leading Representative Elliott to switch his position on solar) and another to get non-voting environmentalists in Georgia, irrespective of party lines, to pledge to vote and prioritise the environment in the 2018 midterm elections.

#### CHANGING BEHAVIOURS:

In addition to the above listed behaviour targets, they also used the film to encourage viewers and audience members to take steps to reduce their carbon footprint.

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The team had the resources to put equal energy into each of these initiatives, placing great emphasis on both global awareness and action and hyperlocal community building and advocacy. So remember that, in this way, the impact dynamic framework is meant to focus, not limit your strategic planning.

In another example, the *The Invisible War* team understood that to end rape culture in the military and to build broad popular support for survivors of rape in a U.S. cultural context that tends to silence and blame victims of sexual assault was also going to require a multi-pronged approach.

Seasoned activist-filmmakers Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick would build their impact strategy into their filmmaking from the start. They engaged policymakers from both sides of the aisle while they were still in production, to understand the policy needs and political landscape and ensure the story they would tell could address these effectively. But, also, this strategy offered the policymakers an opportunity to get out ahead of the story with policy solutions before the film went public. Because ultimately, their goal was not to sensationalise inaction; it was to spark the actions needed to make change.

The team's multi-pronged approach included:

- **Raising awareness:** through grassroots and grass-tops screenings (including private screenings for the highest levels of military leadership) alongside a robust PR and marketing campaign to put rape in the military on the map as an issue in the U.S. It led to an explosion of media coverage.
- **Strengthening institutions:** they used their film to

elevate the efforts of Protect Our Defenders, a then-fledgling organisation that has since taken over the *Invisible War* website and activities.

- **Building community:** they formed a national community of survivors, the Artemis Rising Invisible War Recovery Program, and raised over \$1m to support it.
- **Shifting perception:** they maintained disciplined messaging in all press and public appearances towards a “believe survivors” frame and got this message out broadly.
- **Changing behaviours:** they promoted an online petition to mobilise public pressure towards removing adjudication of military sexual abuse from the chain of command.
- **Sparking collaboration:** for the first time between veterans’ groups, women’s advocacy organisations and policy experts.
- **Changing institutions:** by using the film as a training tool in over 300 military bases and with leadership, sparking new commitments. For the first time in 30 years, Gen. Mark A. Welsh, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, flew all AF Wing Commanders from bases around the world back to the Pentagon to watch the film. And the Pentagon increased funding to address Military Sexual Assault (MSA).
- **Changing policies:** the pressure campaign and attention sparked five Congressional hearings; the Pentagon rolled out seven new rules to improve how the military would prosecute and investigate MSA; Secretary Leon Panetta ordered all sexual assault cases to be handled by senior



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officers and outside of the chain of command; 35 pieces of legislation were passed in the wake of the film, including Senator Kirsten Gillibrand’s Military Justice Improvement Act; she continues to pass out *The Invisible War* DVDs to new legislators to build support for it.

### CULTURE CHANGE IS COLLECTIVE WORK

People often talk about film and cinema as creating big ‘cultural moments.’ And we’d like to pause and pick at that for a moment. There is little doubt of the change potential of an individual film, which, with a good strategy and sufficient resources, can yield significant results over a 1-3 year time period post the film’s release. But a nation’s culture changes over the long-term. It rarely shifts due to a single story or factor. Usually, culture change is the snowballing result of a collection of stories, policy changes, cultural moments, unexpected changes, more stories, more policy changes, and so on and so on.

Returning to *The Invisible War*, the film impact team brilliantly leveraged celebrity connections and their Academy Award nomination to maintain a consistent presence in the media. House of Cards showrunner Beau Willoman created all of Season Two around a Military Sexual Trauma (MST) plotline and credited and thanked *The Invisible War* when he won a Peabody for it. Amy Schumer then wrote a sketch for *Inside Amy Schumer* that is based on the documentary, which she also won a Peabody for. In fact, MST became a major plotline on eight hit prime-time series, including *Scandal* and *The Good Wife*.

*The Invisible War*, in concert with all these other stories in docs and fiction as well as voices from parallel movements, contributed to a cultural moment and the momentum that gave rise to #MeToo.

Amy Ziering says: ***“When we started making The Invisible War in 2010 we were told time and again: “No one wants to hear stories about women. No one wants to hear stories about women being raped - and above all, no one wants to hear about women being raped in the military.” Despite this, women in the military bravely stepped forward - at great personal risk - to speak with us about their harrowing experiences. Their testimonies, captured in our film The Invisible War, inspired students from around the country to reach out to us and implore us to make a film about the epidemic of rape on our campuses. While making The Hunting Ground, time and again students told us the only reason they were speaking up was because they had seen The Invisible War and felt emboldened to do so by the military women’s courage. Fast forward to 2015 and Lady Gaga singing the song from THG at the Oscars and receiving a standing ovation, setting off a global conversation and, we believe, lighting a long dormant fire in the entertainment industry. I think seeing LG perform onstage with students led actresses to think that maybe they could finally speak now too.”***

So, if your focus is to shift broad popular culture, keep your eye on the prize! But don’t lose sight of all the steps you need to take before that can happen and all the other storytellers, stakeholders and contributing factors that are necessarily part of the culture change story.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING





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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### CHANGING MINDS



#### Nine Ways to Change the World

[corelab.co](http://corelab.co)

CoreLab's report is a big broad typology of ways to make change in the world. It's one of the key resources we've adapted to define our Four Impact Dynamics – so if you want to go to the source, this is it.



#### The Common Cause Handbook

[valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF\\_report\\_common\\_cause\\_handbook.pdf](http://valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF_report_common_cause_handbook.pdf)

This is a big deep theory of change piece, exploring the role of human values across all sorts of issues, and with lessons for everyone who wants to make change in the world. We love it.

#### The Mobilisation Reader

[mobilisationlab.org/the-mobilisation-reader-12-must-reads/#readlist](http://mobilisationlab.org/the-mobilisation-reader-12-must-reads/#readlist)

The Greenpeace Mobilisation Lab crowdsourced their reading list ahead of a major mobilisation training course earlier this year. If it's good enough for them...

#### CULTURE CHANGE IS COLLECTIVE WORK

#### A Conversation about Cultural Strategy

[medium.com/a-more-perfect-story/a-conversation-about-cultural-strategy-9e2a28802160](http://medium.com/a-more-perfect-story/a-conversation-about-cultural-strategy-9e2a28802160)

Do you want to know more about how stories support narrative change, which supports culture change and how it all fits together? Read this explanation by Jeff Chang, Liz Manne & Erin Potts: *A Conversation about Cultural Strategy*.



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## FILMMAKING AS EMANCIPATORY PRACTICE

Let's not forget: social progress is about more than the direct outcomes of a campaign. It's also about the process: the way we convene, the way people feel about their participation, and what we leave behind when a film or project moves on. In this way, the process of filmmaking itself can be emancipatory if the filmmaker's practice is emancipatory. To truly mirror the work of justice building means interrogating the entire process, says filmmaker and film school professor Michèle Stephenson.



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**“The history of how documentaries are produced on the ground and financed is one of fundamental extraction at every level of the filmmaking process because it instinctively reproduces the larger inequitable societal context we are all a part of. To disrupt this process we have to be deliberate, intentional and self-aware of how the power dynamics we are a part of play out at every level of our work — from story development, to funding, to production practices, to community engagement and beyond. We have to build in processes and practices that allow us to work towards dismantling inequities that exist at every step and in every sector of the chain of production in the non-fiction storytelling field.”**

—  
Michèle Stephenson, filmmaker,  
Rada Film Group

In her keynote address at the International Documentary Association’s Getting Real conference 2018, she asked everyone who works in the field to “get real” about justice in the context of documentary film. For Michèle this means always being attentive to process and product in

filmmaking, but also to the structure of the industry itself in which impact-oriented films are created.

To be attentive means that as filmmakers, funders, impact producers and distributors, we work together in ways that dismantle systems of oppression rather than uphold them. What does this look like?

- Interrogating the ways we have internalised oppressive systems so that (at worst) we do not perpetuate problematic ideas and (at best) we produce visionary work and campaigns that lead the way.
- Valuing and recognising the importance of multiple voices, perspectives and experiences in their own right, and the shared stakes that bind us.
- Building spaces that are truly emancipatory. Are the perspectives we bring into a room representative of the worlds we wish to create? Are the programs we offer accessible to all? Are the people we hire paid a fair wage? Are their jobs secure? Are we distributing resources equitably and disrupting a problematic status quo? Are we actively reflecting on mistakes or broken systems and building solutions that address them and push towards common goals?

Have a look at a few projects that are leading the way in [Section 3.3](#), titled: *Sustainable and Equitable?*

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

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**“If you want to make movies about us — don’t send in your cameras. Hire us! We can tell our own stories.”**

Arthur Pratt  
WeOwnTV Freetown Media Center

Those who work in the culture change space must engage deliberately and thoughtfully.

To this end, Working Films has developed a series of principles and praxis for filmmaking in collaboration with organisational and filmmaking partners as part of the ***StoryShift*** initiative. The principles are focused on guidelines for accountability to the subjects and communities featured in storytelling. We recommend you read the principles, but a few highlights include:

- Storytelling needs to be developed by, or in partnership with, those whose experiences are being shared
- Constantly examine power dynamics, and follow the leadership of the community or those directly impacted by the issues at hand
- Facilitate participatory processes so that those who are most impacted by the issues raised shape how the storytelling project can be most useful to them and their work
- Work in ways that dismantle oppressive and colonial structures, practices, habits and instincts

Meanwhile Collective Wisdom is a hybrid field study produced by the Co-Creation Studio at MIT Open Documentary Lab that sets out to map, define, and shed light on co-creation methods within media (arts, documentary, and journalism) and adjacent areas of knowledge (design, open-source tech, urban and community planning).

‘Co-creation offers alternatives to a single-author

vision, and involves a constellation of media production methods, frameworks, and feedback systems. In co-creation, projects emerge from a process, and evolve from within communities and with people, rather than for or about them. Co-creation also spans across and beyond disciplines and organisations, and can also involve non-human or beyond human systems. The concept of co-creation reframes the ethics of who creates, how, and why. Our research shows that co-creation interprets the world, and seeks to change it, through a lens of equity and justice.’

The full study is released May 2019 at MIT PubPub and a living series and extension at IMMERSE. **Check it out.**

***“If you want to make movies about us — don’t send in your cameras. Hire us! We can tell our own stories.”*** This was Arthur Pratt’s challenge to people working at the intersection of film and impact during a 2018 IDFA Impact Producers’ Summit led by Doc Society.

Pratt - pastor, playwright, and filmmaker - runs a media center in Freetown, Sierra Leone which was the result of an accountability process that he and filmmaker Banker White engaged in. When White first went to Sierra Leone in 2002 to produce and distribute his film, *Sierra Leone’s Refugee All Stars*, he noticed something that didn’t sit well with him.

***“There’s no formal schooling and very little opportunity in a refugee camp system. So when programs come in, looking to support creativity and the arts, many young people want to participate and lend their ideas to them. But I was struck by the fact that images of the participants and often the creative assets that***

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*they created during workshops (music, media, short films) were ultimately owned by the NGOs running the programs. This surprised me and seemed counter to the goals of these mission-driven organisations, and I began working on a workshop with an aim towards helping local filmmakers understand the value of their creative ideas and contributions.”*

So White set out to use the resources he had to build capacity locally around storytelling and impact. And he knew that, to do so in the right way, he’d have to work closely with a local partner to interrupt this exploitative cycle. That’s how the collaboration with Pratt came to be. Together they co-developed and co-facilitated a storytelling workshop under the name WeOwnTV. In Sierra Leonean Krio, the name literally means ‘our own television’, and their approach paired encouragement and training with an emphasis on ownership and understanding the value of their creativity. Leaning into the success of that collaboration, Pratt challenged White to lean on his professional contacts and privilege to help grow this work.

Eventually they ended up renting a space, bringing in funding and building the programs. Today this African-owned and African-run centre produces work that has transformed lives and helped shape narratives about the country. This can be seen most profoundly through their work during the Ebola outbreak. Because they were local, the team had a unique understanding of the dynamics at play and created life-saving public health messaging in local languages, and media that reflected the views of affected communities in Sierra Leone.

**“For directors who say they care about impact, you have to do the work and challenge yourself to think through power and privilege: how you’re using it, both in terms of what stories you tell and how you go about it. You really have to walk the talk. It’s time consuming, yes. But it’s also central to impact.”**

US Filmmaker Jennifer Maytorena Taylor has also been actively interrogating her own process related to ethics and representation, power and privilege. Her new feature documentary explores how a small blue-collar town in Vermont has been struggling with the effects of the opioid epidemic and poverty during a time when they are also experiencing demographic change, including resettling a small number of Syrian refugees.

Prior to filming, Jennifer had observed the national news media descending on the town to portray the hardships people were enduring through a sensationalising lens. The collective impact of this attention and coverage fostered a deep distrust of the media in the community, which was compounded when many of the same outlets swarmed the town a second time to cover what became a bitter controversy over refugees and the town’s identity. As the town’s ideological and cultural rifts immediately started fitting into familiar patterns of liberals vs conservatives, Jennifer knew it would be essential not to get stuck in that binary story, but also to go more deeply

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and “messily” into how questions of structural racism and class hierarchy shape life and opportunity in this overwhelmingly white community.

For Jennifer, this project had special meaning as she had lived in and around the town for a good part of her childhood, after her mixed-heritage Anglo/Latinx family moved there from Los Angeles. She wondered: “How do my decisions change when the desire to engage constructively and holistically is my starting and end point? How can I go beyond simply avoiding harm to make something that is constructive of good, while also making a compelling film? I am committed to the well-being of the film’s protagonists and to the town itself, but also to offering an honest portrayal that doesn’t fall into poverty porn or feel-good tropes.”

Jennifer asked the film’s main protagonist — a fierce, brilliant woman in recovery who has spent her life in extreme poverty — to be an active participant in the construction of the story. Jennifer wanted this protagonist to be someone with agency, not simply a thing to be observed and represented, who has room to grow and change some of her ideas about class and race but without being pushed into too neat a heroic or “white saviour” character arc.

***“Some filmmakers don’t want to talk about their motives or process with their film’s subjects. They fear doing so means that you risk fostering inauthenticity or a performative approach. But I think the ground has shifted from 20 years ago, even 5 years ago. People today are sophisticated media consumers and it’s foolish to pretend they are not engaging with how they are being portrayed. So for me, it’s better to lay out my***

***ideas and develop a vocabulary together about how to be honest on screen.”***

The result? Hopefully a better, more accountable, and more complex film, she says. And in the meantime Jennifer has watched the main protagonist grow and change as a person through this process. This simple act, for a person who has been overlooked and written off throughout her life, has been transformative.

The film and multi-platform project *Notes on Blindness*, by Peter Middleton and James Spinney, offers a different kind of example of emancipatory filmmaking. The film is based on John Hull’s original audio recordings of his journey into blindness. Producer/Impact Producer Jo-Jo Ellison aimed to use it to foster a common understanding of blindness, bridge the gap between the sighted and unsighted, and break down fear and prejudice related to it - just as John had hoped to do in sharing his story.

Thus, from the outset, the *Notes on Blindness* team recognised that a film about the firsthand experience of blindness must be accessible to all audiences – most especially audience members who are themselves living with sight loss and even those who are hard-of-hearing. So, the team strove to make *Notes on Blindness* one of the most accessible feature films ever made, and in so doing promote accessible filmmaking as a basic right.

From the very beginning they worked closely with the blind community in the design of the project. They held multiple focus groups and worked closely with distributors and experts in the field of audio-visual translation to create four alternative soundtracks for the film. Their ambitious outreach and public engagement campaign included:

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— **A comprehensive program of community and public exhibition events** – including previews of an accompanying VR experience that used binaural sound, tethered to real-time 3D visualisation, to map environments built up through multi-layered patterns of sound.

— **An Accessible Filmmaking App** (in partnership with MovieReading) that offered personalised Audio Description (AD) to UK cinemas for the first time, enabling a truly inclusive experience where blind and partially sighted people could attend non-specialist screenings alongside sighted friends and family.

— **A framework** to allow makers to create films that liberate this underrepresented audience, not only in the ability to access the on-screen information (audio and visual) but in the physical action of attending the cinema itself.

— **The creation of the *The Accessible Filmmaking Guide*** to Accessible Filmmaking, to excite future filmmakers about the creative potential in accessibility, educate funding bodies and academic institutions, and help shape best practices and raise industry standards related to accessible filmmaking.

By working so closely with this community, they were able to identify the most creative approaches to accessible filmmaking and offer visually impaired audiences a choice of compelling, cinematic experiences. As a result, people with sensory impairments were able to fully participate in the screening experience.

The project was an important and trail-blazing experiment in accessibility, which led to valuable lessons for the field at large - most importantly, that there is a robust audience

that exists for accessible cinema. Offering high quality audiovisual translation opens up new opportunities for foreign and sensory-impaired audiences to consume and respond to film. The team created **The Accessible Filmmaking Guide** to build upon what they had learned and help support other filmmakers and professionals in integrating this planning into productions from the start. This not only makes the industry more inclusive - these efforts open up new audiences for films, and new agents of impact.

You can download ***The Accessible Filmmaking Guide* here.**

Of course, these are all very ambitious and impressive examples. We hope they inspire, rather than daunt you. The challenge is not that filmmakers need to start media centres, build accessibility infrastructures, and the like. Instead, the challenge is:

1. To consider all these dynamics as you plan your impact, especially your primary impact dynamics.
2. Be attentive to power and privilege and how it is playing out in a production and campaign.
3. Be honest about what is working and what is not and share what you learn.

Ideally we are working collectively and collaboratively — as a field and with intersecting movements - to dismantle systems of oppression (rather than uphold them) in our filmmaking and impact producing processes... from start to finish.

In the next chapter we will dive into how to draft your strategic plan - the next step to getting there.





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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### FILMMAKING AS EMANCIPATORY PRACTICE



#### Beyond Inclusion: Building Narratives of Liberation

*medium.com/@michele0608/beyond-inclusion-building-*

*narratives-of-liberation-42ccd1a3cd77*

Read Michele Stephenson's full piece here.

#### Collective Wisdom; co-creating media within communities, across disciplines and with algorithms.

*cocreationsudio.mit.edu*

Produced by the Co-Creation Studio at MIT Open Documentary Lab. Go to [cocreationsudio.mit.edu](https://cocreationsudio.mit.edu) for updates.



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## DRAFT YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

**T**he strategic plan is designed to be a live document, a work in progress. You'll keep iterating all the way through the project – perhaps for years to come. The important thing is to make a start. First up, download the Strategic Plan worksheet and then get going:

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
WORKSHEET



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# 1.

Plug in your Impact Vision at the top.

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# 2.

Using the four Impact Dynamics we have identified as prompts, brainstorm all the possible parts of the problem that your film project could potentially address in the first column. Try to identify as many as possible, even if some feel like a real stretch – it's better to delete them later.

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# 3.

Use the headings to break down what your contribution to each one of these problems could be. In particular, try to come up with one or two first tasks against each. If you can't, or it just feels wrong, then you might want to delete that line. The questions you need to ask yourself are:

- Film Messages: What are the specific problems you identify in the film? If you can, start with the headline problem which has defined your primary dynamic.
- Goal: What would a concrete solution/reversal of each problem be that your project could aim for?
- Key Agents: Who could make this happen? What audiences can you speak to and mobilise through your film or the campaign around it? Can you get beyond the choir?

– Impact Dynamic: What kind of impact would this be?

– Tasks: What do you need to do within your project (either with the film or within the film) to make the agent deliver the impact goal?

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# 4.

Finally, have a first stab at identifying your primary Impact Dynamic. Once you've got down and fleshed out as many problems and impact goals as you can, prioritise them by asking yourself two questions:

- Which of these would do most to deliver the Impact Vision?
- Which of these is our film best suited to?

Think about an order that reflects this – whatever comes out top is your primary Impact Dynamic, at least for now. This will help you to think about which film projects you could best learn from.

Example to follow –  
and for others, [click here](#).



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THE IMPACT

# FIELD GUIDE

& TOOLKIT

*From Art to Impact*

### CHANGING STRUCTURES: *THE INVISIBLE WAR*

**IMPACT VISION:** END RAPE IN THE US MILITARY. 1 IN 4 WOMEN WILL BE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED DURING MILITARY SERVICE.

Primary Impact Dynamic: Change structures.

The one politically achievable reform that could dramatically reduce sexual assault was to remove adjudication of these crimes from the chain of command. No bottom-up change would ever be sustainable without this shift.

### IMPACT PLAN (Hypothetical)

Other Films: *Blackfish*, *No Fire Zone*

FILM'S MESSAGES	IMPACT GOAL	KEY AGENTS	IMPACT DYNAMIC	IMPACT TASKS
Rape cases are judged from within a chain of command that is part of the cultural problem	Bring in specific legislation to remove adjudication from the chain of command	High level political elites - Pentagon, Joint Chiefs of Staff, President	Changing Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get the President, Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff to see the film - ideally attended by filmmakers</li> <li>• Build relationships with key leaders (especially Republicans in House of Representatives) to champion cause</li> <li>• Use content of film to remove any possible loopholes for avoiding new legislation</li> </ul>
Rape is ignored/tacitly accepted in the military	Create a conversation in the military, breaking the silence	Senior military figures at all levels		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure film is framed as pro-military</li> <li>• Establish film as training tool within the military</li> </ul>
There is no public pressure on the issue	Dramatically raise public awareness about the epidemic of Military Sexual Assault (MSA)	Journalists, other media outlets		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve mass coverage of issue (not necessarily of film) in all key media channels</li> <li>• Develop and maintain personal relationships with key journalists</li> <li>• Motivate other journalists to investigate</li> </ul>
Survivors have nowhere to turn and lives are often ruined	Build a national community of active survivors	Survivors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide impetus for creation of community</li> <li>• Facilitate funding for national community</li> </ul>

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**“Documentarians can take inspiration from successful efforts by other types of creators to incorporate evaluation into the lifecycle of production – and to reconceptualise production as ongoing and iterative service rather than one-time creation.”**

Social Justice Documentary:  
*Designing for Impact* (2011)  
Center for Media & Social  
Impact, American University

### YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN IS IN ITS FIRST ITERATION

Don't ever hesitate to revisit your strategic plan - in fact we strongly suggest that you do as your project moves forward. The plan is a great way to introduce new team members to the process, gather new ideas, and determine points of action. In the next chapter, we dive into those details: the concrete workforce, tools and resources you'll need to see your plan come to fruition.

### START TRACKING IMPACT NOW

What you've done is create a first idea of how you think your film can drive change in the world. Everything that happens from here on in is data that will either tell you that you're on the right track, or that you're not, or there's another pathway to change that you hadn't yet thought of. By developing a Strategic Plan, you've already taken the first step toward evaluation. Now you can:

- **Start collecting that data.** Like doing your tax return, put all the receipts in a shoe box. Collect every great review, list every community screening (ideally with an audience estimate), file every ‘your film changed my life’ email and make a note of every local politician who referenced your film in a speech. Everything. Like receipts, they add up. They add up to a textured picture of your film's journey through the world. And starting to collect them now is much smarter than trying to go back and evidence it later.
- **Second, keep thinking and reflecting on your Strategic Plan.** Is the data you're getting telling you to plough on? Is it suggesting another pathway, another audience that you hadn't thought of who are finding value and meaning in your work? What more could you do for them? Everything that happens is an opportunity to reflect on your strategy – to evaluate your approach, and improve it while it's live, not just once it's all over.
- **Third, don't leave the data in the shoe box!** All this information will help you make the case for how the story embeds in the culture to make measurable, recognisable, or some kind of perceptible and sustaining change happen. You'll find more on methods in the chapter on [Measuring Impact](#) and how to deploy your [Impact Evaluation Plan](#).



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3.0

IMPACT  
IN ACTION





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## EQUIPPING FOR IMPACT

**N**ow you've got your vision expressed and a first draft Strategic Plan, it's time to get cracking on figuring out the delivery. How much work is this? Who is going to do it? How much will it cost and how can that be funded?



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Back when kangaroos were fish, filmmakers could just focus on making the film, selling the rights to the distributors, at most giving a nod to a few campaigners in the field, and then move on to the next project. But when developing impact campaigns, filmmakers and their teams have to think about what it will take to really move the meter on an issue with their film, how to raise funds for that part of the work, engage new partners and evaluate impact.

It can be a lot. But the work is also really rewarding.

Back in 2016, we surveyed over 250 filmmakers who've been there and done it - 94% of respondents to the question about their experiences of running an actual campaign said they felt it worked out 'great', 'good' or 'OK'. The vast majority of filmmakers also do not want to do impact campaign work by themselves. Neither do they want to give up control completely. Rather 80% of respondents said that they would be looking to develop a dream team of inhouse agencies and partners, working together to deliver their next impact project.

Here is the thing: there are no fixed rules. You can decide what shape/form the impact team takes. How big or how small the campaign work is. How long the campaign work lasts. Let's start with identifying the key skills that most campaigns rely upon and which is going to help you think about your team and who can take on which roles.

### IMPACT CAMPAIGN SKILLSETS

#### DEVISING STRATEGY, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITY

Someone needs to focus on the central message of the film, the effect it will have on audiences, and how to leverage that towards impact. Often, this requires a strong understanding of the issues that the film addresses. This work can range from interviews and online research to stakeholder gatherings (braintrusts) and focus group testing. Whatever it looks like, identifying the current needs of the movement and where the film fits in is essential. It's also important to figure out the appropriate timeline and ideal partnerships to move the work forward.

#### BUDGETING

Someone needs to take the above strategy and turn it into a budget and a cash-flow. (More on budget coming up.)

#### FUNDRAISING

More on the best approach to this in the next few sections of this chapter, but needless to say - someone in the team needs to take charge of fundraising to deliver the impact work, including raising grants, donations, and crowdfunding, which will be an ongoing activity throughout the life of the campaign.

#### DISTRIBUTION

Someone in your team needs to strategise and then negotiate an optimal position for the film's distribution



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that also allows the project to achieve maximum impact. Whether you are going it alone or working with theatrical and broadcast distributors, online and educational distributors, the challenge is to figure out how to combine this with your impact plans so that you also reach the target audiences that matter most for you. i.e. devise the **impact distribution** strategy.

#### PARTNERSHIP CULTIVATION & MANAGEMENT

As the campaign builds and more partners get on board, including funders, issue-based community groups and sponsors, it can be helpful to allocate partnership responsibilities to one person in the team. This work can be fairly sophisticated: from connecting with leadership at major institutions to identify points of alignment and cultivate broad-reaching agreements, to building detailed plans with on-the-ground organisers for how to strategically use the film in their efforts. The tasks can also get granular, involving screening coordination and event planning, managing partner databases to track what stage each relationship is at, coordinating DVD shipments and link shares, arranging contracts and stipend payments (when applicable) as well as conducting ever more research.

#### EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

As soon as the strategy is in place, the team needs to start thinking about how the narrative of this project can be captured and evaluated. It will be essential to capture the story, not just at the end, but as you go along if you are going to be successful at fundraising and building more partnerships. Sometimes film teams will take this on in-house. Other times, they might chose to work with university departments or hire evaluation firms like **Harmony Labs** or **Impact Architects** to run the impact evaluation.

#### COMMUNITY ORGANISING

If building communities, including education and outreach, is your primary dynamic, or even part of your plan, you'll want to consider who will take this on – it may be led by a member of the team, but we have also seen this activity led by an advocacy partner or a contributor from the film who is taking up a leadership position.

#### TOOLKITS & FILM GUIDES

Someone needs to craft the materials which will support successful screenings events and conversations. These can include discussion materials, facilitation guides, action kits and more. Remember that academic curriculum development may require someone with knowledge of classroom learning standards. You can find strong examples of each of these kinds of materials here: **activevoice.net/av-library** here: **blueshifteducation.com/portfolio/collection** and here: **archive.pov.org/educators**.

#### DIALOGUE FACILITATION

If your impact campaign is about a contentious issue and one of your goals is to facilitate dialogue around it, you may require the help of an expert facilitator with deep knowledge around how to manage difficult conversations, and even on-the-ground partners who understand the issues may not be equipped with this particular skillset. If you do need facilitation expertise, this person may end up traveling with the film and needs to be built into the budget.

#### ADVOCACY

Influencing government officials and lawmaking is another specialised skillset. You may want to work with someone or an agency who is confident and connected in the area of government or law you are focused on.

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### PUBLICITY

(INCL. PR & PRESS FULFILMENT)

Publicity, marketing, public relations - these can all be highly useful aspects to any campaign, and is particularly important for films that aim to reach a broad public and shift popular discourse. The work can involve writing op-eds, developing buzz-generating action campaigns and celebrity engagement. But this work on its own is not the same as impact campaigning. And, unless co-ordinated carefully, it can be in conflict with what the impact team wants to facilitate or emphasise.

### STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

In some cases this might be a subset of publicity, but it is a distinct set of skills. Some film campaigns, particularly those dealing with a sensitive issues or exposés, require a crisis communications team to be ready to go as soon as the film is released. Other campaigns require messaging and framing expertise, especially for more nuanced films with a lighter touch, to ensure that the film team is talking about the issues their story addresses in ways that will advance a campaign's objectives, and then to strategically determine how these ideas get translated across platforms.

### ONLINE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

(INCL. SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB CAMPAIGNS, EMAIL ETC.)

Managing the online community crosses over with a lot of the above functions - emails to supporters, website creation for visibility, social media for promotion, and so much more. This could be taken on by a single person or alternatively spread across the team. It's also useful to think about how you want to split the film and campaign platforms, or whether they are a single entity. Either way, there needs to be coordination - this community is a significant portion of the audience for your film.





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## DOES OUR TEAM HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Compared to the process of filmmaking, campaigning requires equal levels of commitment and focus, but is generally much more facilitative, and much more process-driven, although the capacity to be reactive still matters. It usually requires you to build a project team to execute different aspects of the campaign, with a leader to coordinate and manage the team. Although some filmmakers are keen to take control of the impact work as well as the filmmaking, we wouldn't want you to underestimate the scale of this task.

There are a lot of skills listed and we're sure this list isn't the final word. It's important to remember that these functions are often combined into two or three roles, or even fewer if necessary. You may concentrate all of them in the hands of a dedicated Impact Producer (more on that below), distribute them amongst a team which changes over time, or hire a firm to handle chunks of it. It all depends on resources and what you are trying to achieve.

A good way to think about it is to ask yourself yourselves these three questions.

1. How much time do I/we want to commit? Full time or part time - over how many years?
2. Where are we in the process of making the film itself and how much time/energy do we have for the campaign work?
3. What skills and resources do I/we bring to this as an impact campaign?

If the answers are that you have a lot to give in each case, you may well be ready to step into the leadership role of the impact campaign as well as filmmaking. If not, you probably need to review the skills you do/don't have, and then consider bringing in help to bolster the team.

Don't feel at all bad if you or your team don't have all the desired skills or energy; that's often the conclusion most film teams come to. The impact will be best served by people doing what they're good at, not breaking themselves and the project in the process. We've seen it happen!

Extra help might be in the form of agencies or freelancers. It might also be the recruitment of an Impact Producer to join your core team. [The next section](#) provides context for the role of an Impact Producer, and offers a peek into what tasks you might expect them to take on and how they might work.

Finally it's also crucial to remember that your film is part of a broader movement ecosystem; don't operate in a vacuum. You're not the only one working on this issue so develop relationships, whether as team members or partners, that integrate your impact campaign into the existing movement.



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## WHAT IMPACT PRODUCERS DO

**W**hether it's you or an external hire, in order to successfully deliver an impact campaign an individual or a team needs to be in place who can devise the impact strategy and ensure the impact goals are met. In other words, whereas a film might touch audiences, deepen their understanding and help them to make connections, a strategic impact campaign will orchestrate a plan to translate those reactions into actions that support social and environmental change. Doc Society and others in the field refer to a person in this role as an “Impact Producer.”

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Don't worry if you are scratching your head. This is a new professional class and new professional credit. Back in 2013 when we drafted the first edition of the Field Guide, the term had only just been coined. And, at Doc Society, we wanted encourage the acknowledgement of the work that an Impact Producer delivers. Work that was often invisible, work that had been undervalued and thus underpaid. Therefore we advocated for the creation and adoption of the formal title Impact Producer, and argued that they should be written into proposals and budgets and formally credited.

When members of the community gathered in 2012 to first try to codify the role, we started with some pretty simple language. *'Just as films have producers to manage the creative and financial process from script to screen, films also need impact producers to take the film from completion to impact. They devise strategy, they fundraise for the campaign work, they secure key partners, they execute or oversee the delivery of the campaign and they evaluate the campaign.'*

The term was gradually adopted by practitioners and a new professional class began to self-identify. Credits started appearing on films, listings in IMDB and then, in 2018, the US Doc Producers Alliance established an official "Impact Producer" listing in its crediting **guidelines**: *'The Impact Producer is responsible for maximizing a film's potential for social change. Responsibilities may vary based on the film's content and defined distribution goals, but often include strategy development, issue mapping, braintrust facilitation, organisational partnership development and management, digital content production and engagement, and evaluation and impact measurement. An Impact Producer may also coordinate and/or oversee a film's semi-theatrical screening campaign and release. The Impact Producer may also play a role in story development and fundraising, beginning as early as pre-production.'*

While the term 'impact producer' is now more commonly understood, a great deal of specialisation has also taken place so that it is possible to get a whole lot more specific when we think about the kind of impact producer we need on our team.

Some impact producers work as generalists, others are specialised - in marketing, strategy or community outreach. Some Impact Producers come from a film background, some are issue experts. Others are activists, strategists, lobbyists and even marketeers. In any case, they arrive at a project with the explicit aim of ensuring the film will have a tangible effect on the issues that it addresses. But what specific work they'll take on will differ from case to case.





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For example, when an Impact Producer focuses exclusively on developing the impact strategy and plan for a film, and then possibly overseeing the team’s implementation of it, this person can be referred to as an “Impact Strategist”.

Other Impact Producers, however, specialise in on-the-ground implementation, event planning, and grassroots or targeted event promotion and outreach. This person can also be referred to as an “Impact Manager” or “implementer.” They may have strong community organising, partner cultivation, event planning and/or facilitation skills.

We are going to break this down in much more detail in the section [\*\*\*Impact in Action: Build Your Impact Film Team\*\*\*](#). But the point, is when hiring an Impact Producer, be clear about the skills and expertise you’ve got in house, what it is you’re looking for and the kind of work you expect them to do.

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## BUILD YOUR IMPACT FILM TEAMS

It would be brilliant in this section if we could present you with a one-size-fits-all template, indicating which roles and team members you'll need to make the greatest impact with your film. But the truth is, different film teams have different goals, different change strategies and therefore need different expertise.



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Typically, most of the filmmakers we spoke to said that they started their campaign with a pretty small group of people and, as funding and momentum gathered, were able to hire in additional help and support on a contract basis.

Have a look at this snapshot of a few of the films from the **Library** - all with very different levels of resources for their campaign and numbers of people involved.

FILM	CAMPAIGN BUDGET	SIZE OF CORE TEAM	DURATION OF CAMPAIGN
<i>Bully</i>	\$2.6M	6	2011-ongoing
<i>Bag It</i>	\$102,700	3	2010-ongoing
<i>The Age of Stupid</i>	£110,000	8	2008-2010
<i>Give Up Tomorrow</i>	\$125,000	2	2011-ongoing
<i>Weapon of War</i>	\$834,930	3	2011-ongoing
<i>The Invisible War</i>	\$450,000	3 at beginning, 4-6 at height of campaign	2012-ongoing
<i>American Promise</i>	\$1.3M	5	2010-ongoing



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Take the *Bully* team as an example, which launched a new organisation with filmmaker Lee Hirsch at the helm. He decided to take a very hands-on role in the impact campaign, from the campaign's strategic direction to brokering partnerships and being the lead spokesperson for the campaign as well as the film. This came about after giving it a go with impact consulting agencies. For Lee, the gap was too great between lots of strategy talk and bold immediate action. This ultimately drove the decision to create a purpose-formed team.

Through fundraising activities and as a result of *Bully's* success in the media and at the box office, Lee was able to recruit a full time staff of six to work with him on the campaign after its launch in 2011. With the help of impact strategy consultants and other consultants and organisations holding certain expertise (e.g. marketing and educational outreach), he launched “The Bully Project,” a new organisation that would run the impact campaign.

The Bully Project is still going strong. Four years into the campaign they stopped tracking the number of kids who had seen the film, which at that time was 4 million. Every year since, schools across the US show it and they still sell 20 educator kits a month (most kits are now sold and delivered with a dropbox link for \$38.00). But Lee has scaled down staff and now runs the Project mostly on his own, with minimal hourly support from consultants. Due to his work on a new film, he doesn't have the capacity to run more than one main activation at a time for the Project. “The last two years we've really been struggling to sustain it”, he says.

Asked what he might have changed if he could do it all again, Lee is candid: “When we were hotter, I would have done well to slow down and think about scale and longevity. But things were moving so fast. And we had no idea how huge the campaign would become, that we would grow into a brand and become such a trusted and needed anti-bullying resource for kids and families. At our peak we should have focused on sustainability, when we had many funders and wind in our sails. In that way I have a lot of regrets.”

The main piece of advice he offers other filmmakers who find themselves in similar circumstances is: give yourself the space to think and don't be afraid to follow your gut, even if that means making contrarian moves to what consultants are pushing for; ultimately you know your subject better than anyone.

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**“We’re a core staff of six, with one to two interns. In a sense, we’ve built an NGO – a pretty effective organisation that serves a need that’s currently under served.”**

Lee Hirsch  
Filmmaker, *Bully*



**“There’s an enormous amount that is possible but it means your film will dominate your life for a couple of extra years. So be realistic about what you’re willing to devote yourself to. There is no right or wrong. It’s about being effective.”**

—  
Lee Hirsch



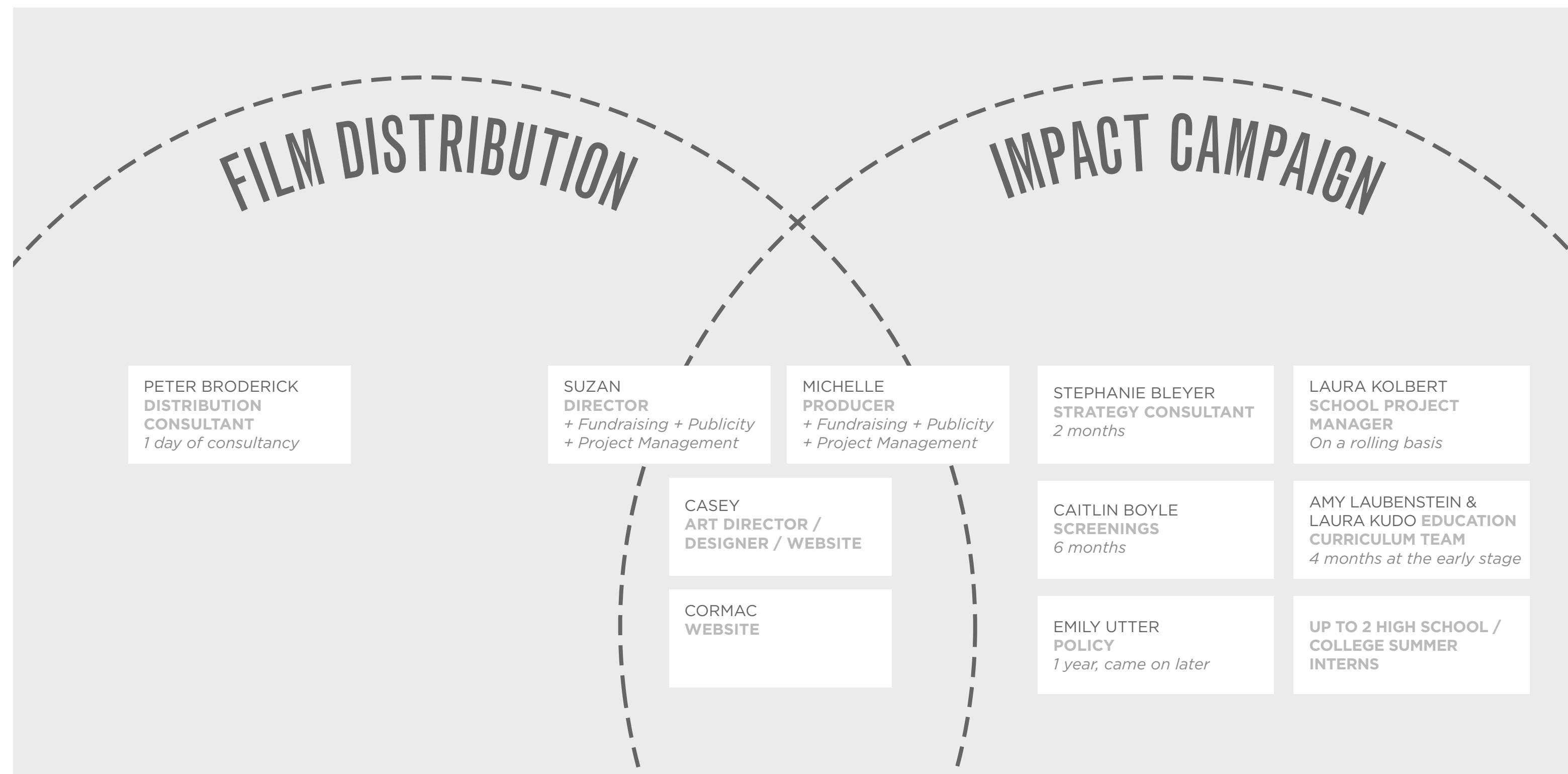
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**“The campaign is still going strong, although the campaign for ‘Becoming a Bag It Town’ has now moved more into a place of resources available on our website.”**  
Michelle Maughan  
Producer, *Bag It*

Four years on, the filmmakers talk about how they are able to transition projects over to some of their partners:

By comparison, the *Bag It* team kept things very lean. They had a comparatively smaller campaign budget to play with, and Suzan and Michelle took on much of the Impact Producer’s responsibilities (including project management, fundraising & publicity), then hired additional support when funds allowed them to do so. (See [Section 3.3](#))

The following team organogram gives a snapshot of all the people who worked with Suzan and Michelle during the campaign. The dotted lines depict those who were brought in temporarily. It’s also worth adding that, whilst Suzan and Michelle led the team, the rest of the team are not arranged in hierarchical order!





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As you can see, there's no one way to do this. Here are a few standard models for what an impact team might look like. We offer this to illustrate the variety that exists in the "impact producer" role. Note: all of these roles are "impact producing." So what are you looking for or offering?

**The impact manager/implementer.** In this model, a filmmaker will hire a professional - a freelancer who is working on a contract basis - to join or report to the film team. This person will generally examine all the work that has been done to date and design a plan or a program to deepen impact around the film's impact distribution efforts. If the film team includes an impact strategist (see below) the manager/implementor will often work with them to advance the impact strategy. Usually this person is brought on full-time or part-time for a limited term (usually 1-2 years). It's a common model that can work well.

**The impact strategist/adviser.** Sometimes a freelance professional will get hired for a more contained scope of work and set of deliverables. In this case the hire will take on only certain pieces of the campaign work, for example: designing the impact strategy but staying away from implementation; designing the online campaign but staying away from all the on-the-ground engagement activities; implementing all the grassroots community screenings but staying away from university screenings (which may be run by a different entity).

You can find freelancers for the above roles in a variety of places, including: the Global Impact Producers Group coordinated by Doc Society, the [Queer Producers Collective](#), [Brown Girls Doc Mafia](#), [Fledgling Fund's Provider Directory](#), [Firelight Media's Fellowship page](#), the [Mezlca Media Collective](#), and [POV's Engagement Strategy list](#).

**The impact division.** Another way some filmmakers have gone about it is to bring on new staff to run the impact campaign. For example, The *Chasing Coral* team brought someone on to be the head of impact at Exposure Labs and she hired a new impact team, creating a department to run the campaign. This department is now set up to stay with the production company as they move onto their next project, and to think about the work across their various projects.

**The impact firm/organisation.** Yet another way to go about this is to hire an outside firm to take on the full impact campaign, or distinct parts of it (e.g. campus engagement, grassroots screenings or strategy). This option can be attractive to those film teams with the funds to hire a team, sometimes with specialised skills. For example: [Active Voice](#), [Peace is Loud](#), [Picture Motion](#) and [Together Films](#). Often these firms have an established process or framework that they will build your film into.

In the U.S., [Working Films](#) leads multi-film media-organising initiatives that are responsive to grassroots movement leaders and resource them to employ documentary media quickly and effectively in a regionally-grounded model that focuses on areas where there is tipping point potential for policy and regulatory change. Similarly, Active Voice Lab's [The Future of Public](#) initiative uses film and other storytelling formats to bring people together to learn about and organise around the consequences of privatisation of public resources.

**A partner leads.** In some cases, an individual from within an organisation or a campaign partner takes up the heavy lifting on the delivery of the Impact Strategy.





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It makes sense, right? They are in this for the long haul and, if aligned in strategy and the way the film is being positioned, this could be a really practical long term solution.

**The filmmaker-turned impact producer.** Lest we forget, sometimes the impact producer on a project is the filmmaker themselves. This may be due to the fact that they are simply the best person for the job due to their experience with the issue, their relationships, and/or understanding of the work. Or it may be due to limited resources, or because they have the time and capacity to take the role on. This is still the most common model we see globally.

As you can see, there are many ways to set yourselves up. If you're interested in seeing the team organograms from more films, you can find them in our [library](#).

## HAPPY PEOPLE DOING GOOD WORK

Momentum on a film project with an ambitious impact campaign can lead to the rapid expansion of a team.

Without a traditional institutional structure, team dynamics are often overlooked in favor of production distribution deadlines. This is a brief tangent that could be much elaborated on, to remind you that filmmaking — and impact production — is a lot about managing people. And happy people do good work.

There's plenty of theory about how to understand your own behaviour and those of your colleagues - whether they are senior, junior or on the same level. It's quite possible that you'll have different working styles, and that as a multi-disciplinary team comes together, you'll have to tackle those differences.

We love the [Honey & Mumford Questionnaire](#) to work out what kind of learners you are. It puts every member of your team into one of four learning types: activist, theorist, reflector and pragmatist. Figuring out your impact strategy and being self-aware about how each team member processes and contributes is very helpful in understanding your team's dynamics.

Ditto the Belbin test, which can be incredibly useful when figuring out the strengths of your team members and who is going to work really well together. It identifies nine different clusters of behaviour that are often displayed in the workplace. If you're interested in finding out more, click on the Geek Out section below.

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Callum Macrae speaking about *No Fire Zone* in India



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### **Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing: Understanding the Stages of Team Formation**

[mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_86.htm](http://mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm)  
Learn how to use Bruce Tuckman's simple model to help your new team become effective quickly.

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#### **Creative Coalitions: A Handbook for Change**

[crisisaction.org/handbook/contents](http://crisisaction.org/handbook/contents)  
Check out this powerful resource, *Creative Coalitions: A Handbook for Change*, which is designed to help unlock effective collective action and secure the systems change that's needed for our movements to succeed. It raises valuable lessons about the role of a convenor, much like that of an Impact Producer.

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#### **The Management Center Resource Library**

[managementcenter.org/tools](http://managementcenter.org/tools)

The Management Center have resources for teams, with download guides and worksheets under the following topics: Delegation, Roles and Goals, Culture, Hiring, Developing People, Managing Time, Addressing Problems.

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#### **Belbin Reports**

[belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles](http://belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles)

The Belbin test is used by business schools around the world. It identifies 9 roles that must be performed for a team to come up with good ideas and execute them well. Each person will naturally gravitate into a number of them - but not all. That's why it takes a team. It's not free but it's very enlightening.

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#### **Rockwood Leadership**

[rockwoodleadership.org](http://rockwoodleadership.org)

Rockwood Leadership have produced a guide for nonprofits on how to manage teams.



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## CONSIDER YOUR SUBJECTS AND AUDIENCES

People agree to be the subjects of documentaries for many different reasons. Their emotional involvement can go from just giving an expert interview to allowing cameras into their private lives and sharing raw and painful experiences. So while there is no template for the appropriate relationship between subject and filmmaker, there is a legacy of ethical considerations that guides the field.

**“I think it worked particularly harmoniously because the producer and director were totally on board with campaign aims. It’s incredibly difficult if there are goals that are too divergent.”**

Joanna Natasegara  
Impact Producer, *No Fire Zone*



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That said, many of the films that have created deep change have relied on the participation and courage of their subjects that goes way beyond appearing on screen. They can become partners in change, in some cases having a longer lasting commitment to the work than the filmmaker themselves. But this can also come at a price.

As a field committed to using documentary for good, it is important that we do our best to avoid harm and unintended consequences. And, whereas it may be impossible to keep everyone safe all the time, as this example illustrates, it nonetheless follows that it is the film team's responsibility to proceed ethically and with accountability. ([Section 3.6](#) below goes over valuable safety and security considerations.)

In the film *Bully* by Lee Hirsch, protagonist Alex Libby went from a silent victim to an advocate and spokesperson for a cause which has taken him all the way to the White House. He was whisked from a reality where every meal was insecure to becoming a celebrity and hanging out in billionaires' homes almost overnight. Each year hundreds if not thousands of schools across the country watch and discuss *Bully*. The number of young people who know Alex and others in the film is really significant. Lee admitted that the instant celebrity was thrilling but also very hard and confusing for Alex, who is on the Autism Spectrum.

An article in the Des Moines Register from the height of the campaign shared that Alex's mother Jackie knew she didn't need to be as involved as she was in the campaign, but when she thought about "what might have happened to Alex if the moviemakers hadn't spotlighted his plight" she felt compelled. Noting that a national group has counted nearly 2,000 suicides of bullied children, she explained: "That's 2,000 families that have lost their children, and they're never going to get them back." As Jackie traveled with Alex to so many anti-bullying appearances with feverish intensity, she eventually lost her warehouse job.

The intensity took a toll and family structures fell apart. While Lee recognises that none of them realised the extent to which the film and campaign would take off, he nonetheless felt a tremendous responsibility to the family. "I ended up caring for Alex for a couple of years as an unofficial foster parent to him and his educational advocate which propelled me into a yearlong and ultimately victorious lawsuit with The New York City School system to win Alex funding for a special school that could meet his needs. Partly because of the road we traveled together for the impact campaign, I felt a deeper level of responsibility to him."

*The Cove* offers a different kind of example. This powerful and hard-hitting film about a US environmentalist who exposes dolphin hunting on Japan's Pacific coast was highly acclaimed, and even won an Oscar. **It is credited** with pressuring the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) to cut ties with its member group in Japan and subsequently getting it to ban its members from acquiring dolphins from the Taiji dolphin drive fisheries, as well as reducing the country's dolphin catch, although **some activists debate** the centrality of the film's role in this.

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Years later, this [Guardian article](#) tells the same story but from the perspective of the Taiji dolphin hunters, whose centuries-old whaling heritage was under scrutiny. With their voices in the mix, the narrative becomes more complicated, and the question of positive impact less clear-cut. New York-based Japanese film-maker Megumi Sasaki, who responded with her own documentary on the matter, *A Whale of a Tale*, **explained**: “As long as we have pressure from outside the country, the more determined Japanese people are to continue it... It’s such an irony.”

If they had to do it all over again, *The Cove* filmmakers may have made the same decisions. The key consideration is that when positive impact is the goal, engagement with affected communities is essential, irrespective of the final decisions about where to take the story. This is a practice and principle that helps guard against extractive filmmaking, wherein the team interrogates the balance between artistic independence and a commitment to the activists and community leaders they represent in their work. That’s the model that Skylight Pictures has developed at [SolidariLabs](#), which brings together social justice filmmakers with activists and community leaders for mutually supportive, trust-based relationships where artistic independence can thrive.

It is part of your strategic planning to figure out if it’s useful and appropriate to your film and plans to involve your subjects and at what level.

Perhaps most importantly, we recommend that once your film is complete, you sit down and fully brief your subjects on the merry-go-round that is a film’s launch – from festival premiere to cinema screenings, press, social media etc. The conversation should also cover the longitudinal commitments available on the impact campaign – regional

schools tours, speaking to lawmakers, etc. And once you’ve laid it out, ask them, what do they want and not want? Are they prepared for the attention and commitment of agreeing to be both in the film and part of the campaign?

You need to unpack the opportunities and the risks for them. How long will this go on for? Will they be compensated? Are there security considerations? What are the implications for their dependents if they are going to be out on the road with the film? Are their expectations of what the film might do for them too low? Or are they too high? ([Section 3.9](#) on building effective partnerships digs into navigating this relationship further.)

Depending who your subject is, the following diagram may help frame your conversation and with planning your next steps.



**“When we reject the single story, when we realise that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.”**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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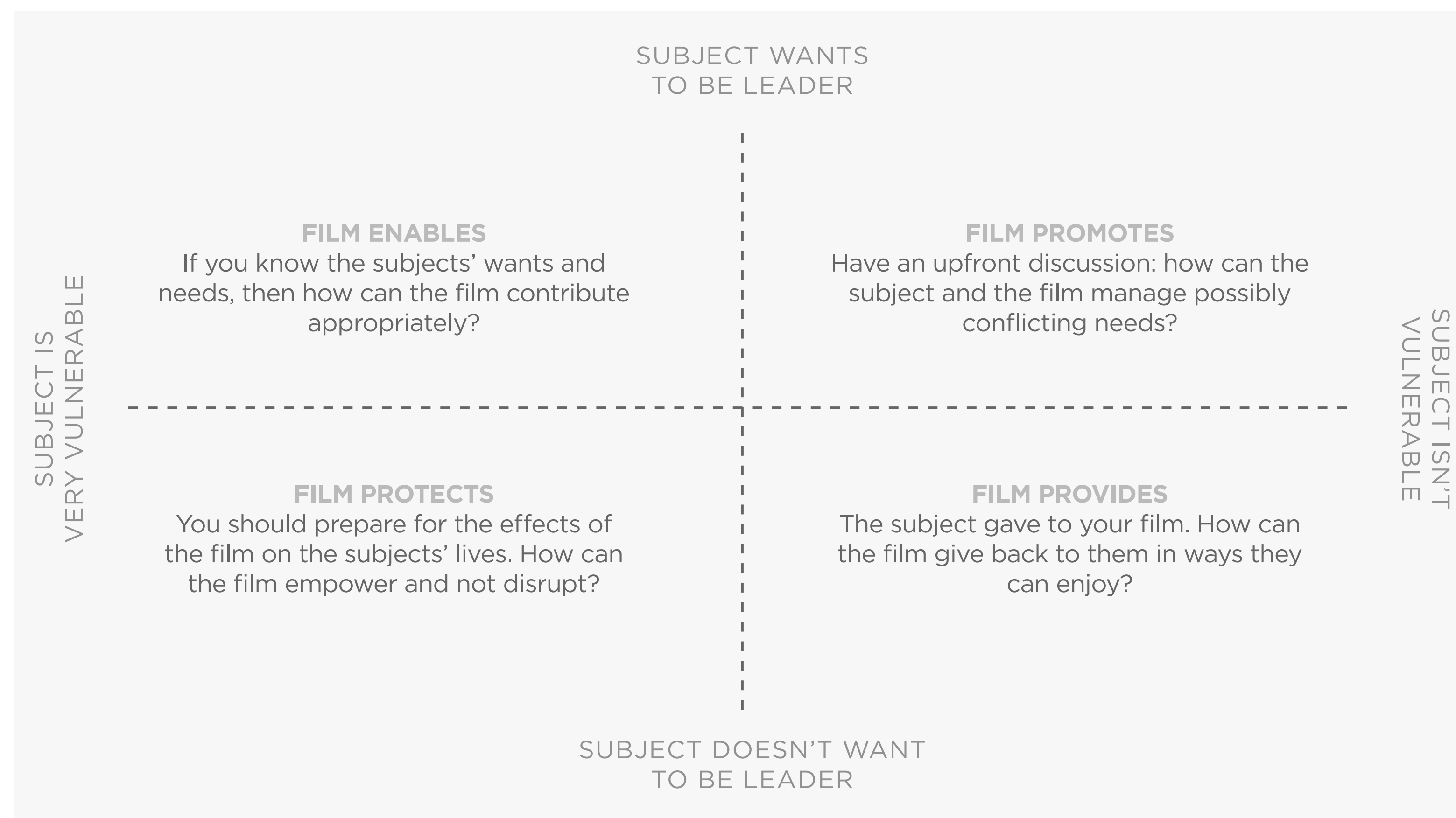
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This diagram asks you to consider whether your subjects want to play a leadership role, and also whether they are vulnerable or might be made vulnerable by the process of being in the film or appearing publicly with it.

**What's your responsibility to your subjects?**







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Selvi, the subject of *Driving With Selvi*, on the road and meeting school children after a screening of her film.

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## Additional considerations

### IF YOUR SUBJECT IS ALREADY IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE:

How can the film help to propel them and their work further?

The protagonist in the film *The Interrupters* by Steve James is Ameena Matthews. At the time the film was made, she was a powerful but largely unknown figure beyond the streets of Chicago. The aim of the film campaign was to propel the organisation and model she was spearheading onto a national stage. And they were successful. Suddenly, Matthews was on the front page of every paper, she was winning awards, she was traveling all over, and new opportunities were emerging for her.

It isn't always so straightforward. In some cases, focus on one individual leader and the attention from the media and audiences may cause unexpected tensions within their organisation or community. You need to prepare for it. Success and exposure can be complicated.

### IF YOUR SUBJECT IS AN EMERGING LEADER:

Many people find that the experience of becoming a spokesperson for the film propels them to become a *community leader*. They discover a new role and gravitate towards it.

For example, Mahoma Lopez from the Hot & Crusty bakery in NYC, who appears in Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick's *The Hand That Feeds*, could not have anticipated what was just around the corner for him. He leapt from sandwich-

maker, uniting his undocumented immigrant coworkers against abusive conditions, to leading the Laundry Worker's Center off-screen long after the film campaign ended. "Having this documentary about a tremendous campaign success has been really valuable. It helps me inspire the workers and show them what's possible."

Can you help to enable this journey for emerging leaders alongside the journey of the film? What kind of practical and emotional help do they need to do this? What resources do they need so that they can take the time off work, or connections to organisations that they can team up with?

### IF YOUR SUBJECT IS VULNERABLE:

Trusting a filmmaker and letting them into your life is one thing, but making sure they understand what is to come is another. Because the moment it is shared with hundreds of people at the premiere, as well as the buzz thereafter, can be overwhelming.

While filming her documentary *CARE*, a story about the experiences of home care workers and their older clients, Deirdre Fishel was faced with a series of ethical decisions. She tells the story of a conversation she had with one of the women in her film, Delores, who worked for a home care cooperative in the Bronx. When Deirdre mentioned the film's broadcast on PBS, Delores asked: "What do you mean?"

"That was a hard moment," says Deirdre. Because Delores was introduced to the film through the cooperative she worked for, she thought Deirdre was making a film for them. "Somehow I didn't make it clear enough that I was an independent filmmaker and what



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my goals were for distribution.” And as it turned out, Delores felt very uncomfortable about having shared her story of becoming homeless, given Deirdre’s hopes for broad public exposure. In the end, Delores agreed to proceed after seeing that she was portrayed as a hero for continuing to care for elders despite her own hardship. But had she felt differently, the choices Deirdre would have had to make would have been very complicated because they couldn’t have made the film without her and their budget would not have allowed them to film someone else.

*“It became clear to me how much you have to discuss not only filming, but your hopes for the life of a film after you’re done portraying people’s lives. I now make it as clear as possible to all my film subjects that for every film it’s my intent for it to be seen as far and wide as possible.”*

—  
Deirdre Fishel

Another one of the protagonists in *CARE* was Vilma, who was undocumented at the time. Deirdre worried for her, so she consulted with filmmaker colleagues on the best way forward and determined that it was important to be as clear and honest as possible. Though, at the time, there was no history of US Immigration going after undocumented film subjects, the team would not have been able to protect Vilma if they did. Vilma understood the stakes but decided to proceed anyway. She was frustrated and was willing to take some risks to get her story out there. She also hoped that by the end of the story, she would have her Green Card, and weighed that into her own decision-making.

There was a more complicated dynamic related to another of the film’s protagonists, Dee. Dee suffered from dementia and, though she had moments of lucidity and seemed keen to participate, Deirdre wondered: would she know what she was agreeing to? So, Deirdre consulted with Dee’s family and got their signed permission as well. She also consulted with a lawyer. And she spoke to Dee often and at length about the film production. But Deirdre also had to weigh other ethical choices. In one scene, for example, Vilma helps to shower Dee. The decision to allow viewers a window into how intimate these caregiving relationships are was an important one for the story. But it had to be weighed against questions of consent. Choices like these are never easy but Deirdre continued to engage in open dialogue with Dee, her family, and with her colleagues as she proceeded. At Dee’s passing, her family wanted Deirdre to know how important it would have been to Dee, a Christian woman, to know her story and experience would be used in some way to help others. “The more I make films,” says Deirdre, “the more I feel you just have to be honest about the risks and the open questions.”

How can you protect your subjects from exposure that feels uncomfortable? To what extent is it possible to protect them? To what extent is it a filmmaker’s responsibility to do so? Sometimes these answers are not so clear. The best we can do is empower them with the truth and do our best to help while making sure that the whirlwind of the film doesn’t turn their lives upside down.



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## TRY A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Sonya Childress of Firelight Media and Twiggy Pucci Garcon of the True Colors Fund have worked to lift up and apply “trauma-informed care” (TIC) principles to the context of documentary film. In presentations they’ve offered at Firelight retreats and at the Allied Media Conference in Detroit, they have shared TIC principles and asked filmmakers and impact producers to consider the emotional safety of a film’s protagonists, as well as for the filmmakers and impact producers who work with them.

When film protagonists participate in the release it presents an opportunity to share their story and engage in discussions with the press, audiences and key stakeholders in real time and online. This can result in a mix of positive and negative repercussions for protagonists - both personally and professionally. This is particularly true when the protagonists are not representing their professional role, but rather sharing a personal experience on film.

In these sessions, Sonya and Twiggy present various scenarios where TIC principles may be called upon to prepare a protagonist for or shield them from the possible negative repercussions of participating in the festival run or impact campaign. Sometimes, a film’s protagonist is pressured to retell a story (at a screening, to press, etc.) and when that story includes experiencing trauma (or witnessing trauma) it can both be triggering and painful for them. Sometimes, the audiences of festivals or public screenings are quite different from the protagonist, revealing uneven power dynamics when audiences expect protagonists to be vulnerable (or celebratory), or feel entitled to ask questions of the protagonist that

push them outside their comfort zone. How can impact producers or directors establish boundaries with the protagonists and event hosts to ensure the release and campaign experience is safe and mutually-beneficial for protagonists as well as directors and other stakeholders?

Sometimes the Impact Producer when asked to tend to the protagonist during the release of the film can also experience secondary trauma while holding space for the protagonist. The sessions explore ways that impact producers (and directors) can establish new personal boundaries and self-care strategies during the release phase that respect the needs and emotional safety of all parties involved. As Twiggy Pucci Garcon stressed: “One does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.”

To this end, here are a few questions to consider as you prepare your teams:

- What is it that you need to do to be accountable to your protagonists?
- When considering the emotional safety of protagonists, what are you responsible for and what can’t you be responsible for?
- What level of transparency is necessary?
- What resources may be required to support trauma-informed care to protagonists?
- Does your plan account for the various ways people will consume the media post-release, including online strategies?

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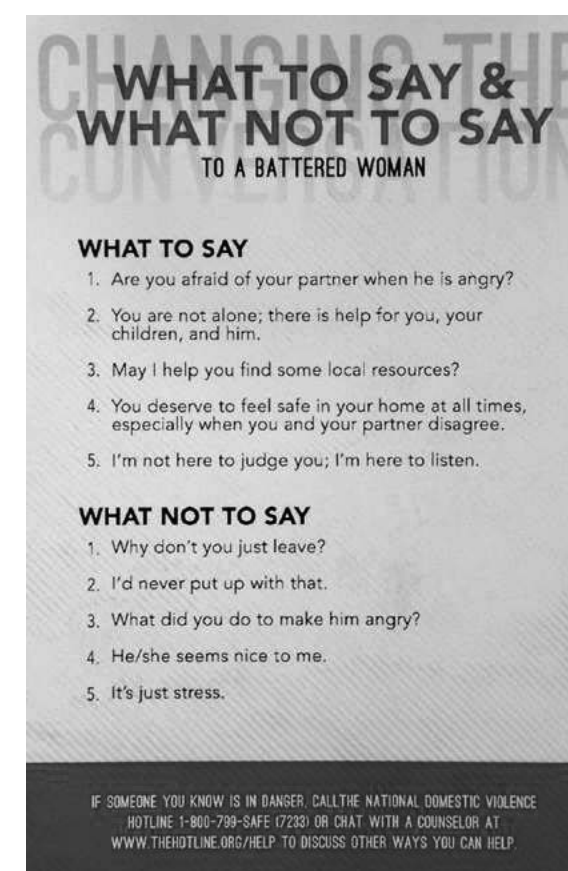
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Ultimately, the TIC framework offers a model that encourages film teams to consider and prepare for positive and negative repercussions on the protagonist, and craft a release strategy in which the protagonists' needs are respected and addressed and that their resilience and agency are validated and built upon.

### YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO VULNERABLE AUDIENCES TOO

Your film may also touch a very raw nerve for some audience members, perhaps because it tells the story of an experience they have recently gone through, or went through a long time ago. What have you put in place to help and guide people?

The *Private Violence* team provided leaflets at screenings of their film, encouraging people to volunteer to donate items for their local refuge or shelter, as well as providing tips on what to say/not to say to those who have experienced domestic violence.



Created by  
Kit Gruelle, Designer

The *Miners Shot Down* team worked with Amnesty International to ensure that the community of Marikana had access to trained counsellors, fluent in the relevant local languages. Before its release, the film was shown to the widows with counsellors present. When the team, alongside a legal NGO, took the film to the rural villages that the slain miners originated from, it was crucial once again to offer psycho-social support to families and whole communities directly affected by the massacre as they were led through a deeper understanding of what had taken place.

Now let's turn to a film team's physical safety and legal security.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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Joe Moses, subject of *The Opposition* by Hollie Fifer



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### **A Question of Ethics: The Relationship between Filmmaker and Subject**

[documentary.org/feature/question-ethics-relationship-between-filmmaker-and-subject](https://documentary.org/feature/question-ethics-relationship-between-filmmaker-and-subject)  
Wanda Bershen wrote on the subject for Documentary Magazine, a publication of the International Documentary Association.

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#### **Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work**

[cmsimpact.org/making-your-media-matter/documents/best-practices/honest-truths-documentary-filmmakers-ethical-chall](https://cmsimpact.org/making-your-media-matter/documents/best-practices/honest-truths-documentary-filmmakers-ethical-chall)  
The Center for Media & Social Impact (formerly the Center for Social Media) interviewed filmmakers to aggregate the most common ethical challenges encountered in documentary and how they have been addressed.

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#### **Ethics Behind the Lens**

[chicagohumanities.org/media/gordon-quinn-ethics-documentary-filmmaking/](https://chicagohumanities.org/media/gordon-quinn-ethics-documentary-filmmaking/)  
Kartemquin co-founder and Artistic Director Gordon Quinn [kartemquin.com/about/gordon-quinn](https://kartemquin.com/about/gordon-quinn) delivers examples from *Hoop Dreams*, *Prisoner of Her Past*, and *The Interrupters* to illustrate how filmmakers navigate the murky waters.

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#### **True Life Fund**

[truefalse.org/program/true-life-fund](https://truefalse.org/program/true-life-fund)  
The annual True/False Film Festival in Columbia, Missouri, has a fund, which every year acknowledge the subjects of a film and raises money to ensure they get some material benefit for their generosity to the audience. The violence Interrupters of *The Interrupters* documentary have [received this award](#).

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#### **Katerina Cizek is Opening up Documentary at MIT's new Co-Creative Studio**

[independent-magazine.org/2017/10/katerina-cizek-opening-documentary-mits-new-co-creative-studio/](https://independent-magazine.org/2017/10/katerina-cizek-opening-documentary-mits-new-co-creative-studio/)  
As Katerina Cizek from MIT's Open Documentary Lab says: "making work with people rather than about them, and focusing on the ways you can collaborate with people known formerly as subjects."

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**Want to go even deeper? You can take Skylight Pictures Masterclass:**  
[skylight.is/outreach/masterclass](https://skylight.is/outreach/masterclass)

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**The screening guide for *Audrie & Daisy* frames how to prepare an audience for a potentially triggering experience**  
[www.audrieanddaisy.com/watch-and-discuss/discussion-guide-for-screenings](https://www.audrieanddaisy.com/watch-and-discuss/discussion-guide-for-screenings)



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## TAKING SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

**W**hen filmmakers speak truth to power, all kinds of vulnerabilities arise for the film teams and film subjects. That's why we're dedicating a subsection to how best to navigate them.

Questions that come up can range from:

- What are the risks for the subjects of the film?
- How do I weigh them against the potential impact?
- How will the film's release affect impacted communities not shown in the film?
- How do I protect myself when entering into dangerous situations?
- How should I advise other members of my team?



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Doc Society has been involved in a number of film projects over the last few years that required deep sensitivity and care with respect to the security and safety of all people involved in the production of the films.

For example: *Virunga* required rigorous safety planning and plenty of on-the-fly decisionmaking to ensure safety in a conflict zone and life and death situations for their partners and protagonists, as well as potential risks for the film team. They carried out rigorous, advanced security planning, which involved developing strategies and considerations related to extraction, digital security, physical protection, not only for contributors but also their friends and family, the possibility of exile and preparation around that and required intervention by human rights groups and institutions, work case scenario preparation for emergencies, and more. They also developed a full legal strategy to ensure that they could effectively navigate the blowback they knew they would get after the film's release.

In South Africa, prominent ANC members were implicated in the massacre laid out by the film *Miners Shot Down*. When the film team toured communities, they encountered aggrieved ANC members, who in some cases threatened them and attempted to prevent the film from being screened to the community. On one occasion, an ANC leader told them it would be illegal to show the film in town. The filmmakers had lawyers

on call around the clock to help them navigate these tense situations. They collaborated with local groups and enlisted supportive community members to help defend the screenings. And they alerted their lawyers, colleagues and the media as to their whereabouts at all times.

The uncertainty and feelings of being overwhelmed are all too common, especially for early-career filmmakers. Khushboo Ranka from the *An Insignificant Man* team offered her experience in the making of that film:

“We were first-time filmmakers who just picked up cameras and started shooting.” With a crew that was over 50% women, it was a real challenge. “The young women on our crew were doing this kind of work in male-dominated public events and were molested and touched inappropriately often. I tried to tell them not to go back but they refused to listen. They didn't want it to come in the way of their ability to work – as camera and sound persons. And I just didn't have the tools I needed to engage with that situation. Even I myself felt it. So I would use the camera as my shield.”

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## SAFE AND SECURE

These stories and others led DocSociety to work with filmmakers, journalists, lawyers and security experts to create a new resource for documentary filmmakers: [www.safeandsecure.film](https://safeandsecure.film). It walks film teams through a series of questions (100 in fact) to help you identify your vulnerabilities as a group and the skills, training or support you'll need to account for them. It also offers tips and directs you to resources and further reading to help strengthen your safety and security efforts.

Here's some context for the kind of support you'll find in the handbook.

### DIGITAL SECURITY

You may not think at the outset of a project that you need to protect your communications. But this may become necessary as events unfold, so it's advisable to think ahead and plan for privacy wherever possible. Take time with your team to think through both the digital security challenges you could be facing throughout the project and how you will communicate and share source material with your team members securely. The handbook walks you through a digital risk assessment, data management, mobile precautions, communications practices and emergency help.

### JOURNALISTIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Due diligence in research, fact-checking, good record-keeping and acknowledgement of others' perspectives are all good journalistic practices that are good documentary filmmaking practices too, and may ultimately help defend your case if your integrity as a filmmaker is ever questioned. This is especially true for

undercover filming, which can be considered an illegal invasion of privacy. When used in a journalistic context, it needs to adhere to local laws, be considered 'in the public interest' and deemed to be fair, so you'll need a legal strategy to mitigate against unnecessary legal risk. The handbook walks you through libel, ethics and fact checking resources, journalistic protection resources, undercover filming resources, and journalism trainings for filmmakers.

### LEGAL SECURITY


It can be tough to withstand legal challenges from much better funded adversaries, even when your film and its evidence is water-tight. But the less well prepared you are, the more vulnerable you make yourself. So start thinking about your legal needs early on and engage a lawyer to advise as the production unfolds. Film teams can face challenges related to: defamation; discoverability; the privacy and the public interest; newsworthiness; contempt; copyrights and clearances; and fair use. Remember: an Errors & Omissions (E&O) insurance policy is usually a mandatory requirement for many funders and distributors who will require evidence of such a policy being in place before a film is published or otherwise exploited.

### HIGH RISK LOCATIONS

Hostile environments can occur in any country and do not necessarily entail traditional war and conflict. Filming in a 'deep state' where surveillance may be prevalent, or filming a volatile and violent domestic protest or civil unrest, where tensions can run high, especially if you are in a vulnerable demographic, presents similar risks and benefits. To mitigate risks, a risk assessment should be completed for each shoot. It's also crucial to carefully

**Want to avoid your doc film project being surveilled?**

Find out your options at  
<https://safeandsecure.film>

 safe+secure

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assess the current level of experience of your team (from producers to camera people, fixers, drivers and translators) noting the sensitivity of their approach to working in high risk locations ahead of time. In addition, planning ahead for: where you can seek help when needed; identifying the personal safety equipment you may need; travel accommodations and logistics; medical risks and planning for both physical and mental health; communications planning; and insurance resources.

#### SUBJECTS AND SECURITY

All filmmakers have legal obligations to the subjects of their films to ensure that they are both appropriately and fairly represented in the documentary. But in the case of subjects who are made vulnerable as a result of filming, most filmmakers want to consider their ethical responsibilities too, which may include protection of their identity and location or offering practical help and reassurance through to the film's release and beyond. It's important to discuss the risks with the subject in detail and make contingency plans with them for these eventualities, in particular should their anonymity be breached.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS RISKS

This is not about whether critics like your film or not. This section explores the deliberate attempts made to discredit the filmmakers and subjects of your film and may also involve pressuring of your funders and exhibitors, in the hope of making the film and its revelations go away. For many projects, this kind of dark PR activity only materialises when the film premieres at a festival or other screenings, though for some films the battles begin much earlier and external crisis management may be required.

In addition, we've created a Safe+Secure checklist, which should be completed ahead of a film project going into production and repeated as often as your situation materially changes.

Download your **Safe+Secure Checklist** and, if useful, your **Hostile Filming Protocol**.



DOWNLOAD  
HANDBOOK



DOWNLOAD  
CHECKLIST



DOWNLOAD  
HOSTILE PROTOCOL

It is absolutely our ambition to ultimately make this a resource for filmmakers everywhere. Given the size of that challenge, we have started with the US and UK and will rely on the input of international documentary organisations and independent filmmakers to go further. If you can help us - please get in touch: **contribute@safeandsecure.film**

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

**Is your film at risk  
from dark PR?**

Find out your options at  
<https://safeandsecure.film>





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Ron Davis and Lucia McBath, parents of murdered teenager Jordan Davis and subjects of *3.5 Minutes, Ten Bullets*





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## Further reading

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##### **Dangerous Documentaries: Reducing Risk When Telling Truth To Power**

*[cmsimpact.org/resource/dangerous-documentaries-reducing-risk-when-telling-truth-to-power](https://cmsimpact.org/resource/dangerous-documentaries-reducing-risk-when-telling-truth-to-power)*

Check out the Center For Media & Social Impact's seminal 2015 report '*Dangerous Documentaries: Reducing Risk When Telling Truth To Power*'

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##### **While you are at it, you might want to take a look at human rights organisation, Witness's powerful library of resources**

*[witness.org/resources](https://witness.org/resources)*



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## SUSTAINABLE & EQUITABLE?

**B**efore we head to budgets, let's take a beat to think about sustainability and equity.





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Documentary filmmaking is precarious as a profession. Add the demands of an impact campaign, and it's harder still. The **2018 Center for Media and Social Impact at American University report** found that “4 in 10 documentary professionals (39%) say that less than a quarter of their personal annual income came from documentary over the past year.” Similarly, 4 in 10 documentary filmmakers (42%) say their most recent film did not generate any revenue at all and about a quarter (22%) did not make enough revenue to cover unpaid production costs and make a profit. It also noted that “this pattern is more pronounced for documentary filmmakers from racial and ethnic minority groups.”

A **2019 survey** into the sustainability of European Documentary professionals conducted by the European Documentary Network found that more than one in four respondents (26%) earned less than €10,000 on average on a yearly basis from their documentary work. Another 22% and 21% earned respectively between €10,000 and €19,999 and €20,000 and €29,999 per year.

While these numbers draw from a North American & European context, the question of who can afford to do this work is relevant everywhere - challenges which are also reflected in the underpayment of impact producers as well as film production team members.

As artists, activists, advocates and organisers working in the film-impact space, we all recognise these challenges of sustainability and equity. And we must recognise that the spaces we build and occupy only get better, stronger and more effective when they are developed by and for us all. Because true impact is only possible when the foundation of our work is sound.



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## SO WHO GETS TO DO THIS WORK?

Building a more inclusive and diverse workforce in this space is essential, and nowhere has this been tackled more stridently than in the U.S., where filmmakers of colour have been paving the way for other POC media makers and impact producers, creating innovative new models to support one another and get their work made and seen.

### Check out these examples:

In 2008 [Firelight Media](#) created the Documentary Lab to institutionalise the informal mentorship role that co-founder Stanley Nelson played with documentarians of colour. The flagship program now provides comprehensive support and mentorship for emerging filmmakers of colour. Then, in 2017, they launched the Impact Producer Fellowship to provide social change activists with training on media strategy and impact and connect them with diverse storytellers. Together, these programs aim to create a pipeline of diverse makers and impact producers and address the barriers to entry and sustainability in the field, while building an ecosystem of filmmakers and strategists who together can elevate new narratives about marginalised communities and reach diverse audiences.

The Alliance for Media Arts + Culture is the national program sponsor of [Arts2Work](#), a new workforce development initiative that aims to address structural barriers and create pathways into the creative economy for artists of colour, women, youth, veterans, the disabled and others traditionally marginalised or excluded. By establishing the first US federally-registered

Apprenticeship Program in Media Arts + Creative Technologies, The Alliance is now eligible for state and federal workforce development funding that has never been available in our sector. The initiative will support a sustainable and accountable mentorship infrastructure (i.e. paid, peer-reviewed, with advancement after the Apprenticeship year) for Producer and Editor Apprentices who are hired from day one of the program. Other career pathways will follow in 2020, including Digital Archivist, Cinematographer and Game Designer.

Meanwhile [Lights! Camera! Access! 2.0](#) is a caucus of producers, writers and directors that work together to increase employment in the creative sector for people with disabilities. It also organises people to advocate for better policies and improve portrayals, and advocate for accessible media over all.

[The Freelancers Union](#) formed to support contract workers in a growing gig economy who face challenges built into their structure of work, from inconsistent pay to more costly healthcare options, as well as feelings of alienation. It has been networking freelancers to build a strong community who advocate collectively for protections and for resources that support them.

Mentorship models also exist, such as the [Women in Film Mentoring Program](#) in the US & [Women In Film & Television UK](#), and [Bird's Eye View's Filmnomics in the UK](#) or the [Sisters in Cinema](#) program, which was founded as a resource for and about African American women media makers and offers career support to develop and celebrate future generations of storytellers and their audiences.



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There are also initiatives designed to ensure accountable, non-extractive filmmaking models. Filmmaking models that reflect, nourish, and strengthen the individuals and communities whose stories they represent. Production houses like **Multitude Films** and **Rada Film Group** (among others) insist on the importance of making sure their filmmakers and teams are from the communities represented in the media they produce. Some teams go beyond filmmaking to support emerging voices and projects in the communities where they work. **Skylight Pictures'** Solidarilabs, for example, networks creatives and movement leaders to support education and collaboration which advances their shared efforts. (For more accountable filmmaking practices, see ***Filmmaking as Emancipatory Practice*** in **Section 2.6.**)

WeOwnTV is a collaborative media education project that grew out of a shared commitment to regenerative and accountable filmmaking. In 2009, American documentary filmmaker Banker White helped open the doors to the **Freetown Media Center** together with local Sierra Leonean filmmakers Arthur Pratt and Lansana Mansaray. The goal was to build the capacity of local storytellers to tell their own stories. Today, the African-owned and African-run centre is home to some of the most sought after professionals in the subregion. WeOwnTV programs focus on supporting filmmakers and artists through direct grants, professional mentorship and media education. It runs as a cooperative, supporting sustainable career paths for local filmmakers, from bargaining for fair wages to bringing in regular work. And it adapts impact producing efforts to local needs.

Then there are also remarkable organisations that are centering the question of audiences and equitable access.

**Ambulante** is a legendary traveling film festival in Mexico that creates more points of access for communities that would otherwise not have the opportunity to see or engage in discussions surrounding documentary films. But it is also building local capacities around impact and facilitation related to the films they work with.

Among its key initiatives is a one-year program - **Ambulante Más Allá** (Ambulante Beyond) - for young rural students who are indigenous, mestizo or of African descent, which brings the school to their communities. Once a month, teachers and crew go to rural sites for intensives and leave tools there for students to work with. In this way, the project builds important capacities, opportunities and career pathways for young people and voices that they would otherwise not have access to.

Mobile cinema has become essential for many in our community, and **Sunshine Cinema** is a cinema program that brings film to harder to reach communities in Africa. It grew out of the desire to ensure communities that have traditionally not had access to documentaries or film (due to infrastructural or other barriers) can gain access. In so doing, it has also helped to build a network of youth activists - local, on-the-ground impact producers - who they employ to run their own screenings using a mini solar-cinema kit.

These are just a few examples of brilliant initiatives that already directly engage questions of equity and sustainability in the film and media industry - but there is so much further to go. What is clear is that our community is getting much more conscious of structural barriers, and has begun organising and voicing concern.



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The following are a compilation of ideas/principles that we've been tracking--in online forums, at industry gatherings, and elsewhere—to help our community imagine a more equitable and sustainable future. See what you think. This list is in-progress and needs your voice.

- **Film festivals and other industry gatherings should deal explicitly with structural inequality** issues surrounding meetings and panels to ensure the integrated participation of a diverse range of creative professionals. This benefits the field and society at large.
- **Film festivals and pitch forums should pay the directors' and producers costs** to attend/participate, depending on the size and scale of the festival. This establishes a necessary standard that ensures filmmakers are getting paid for all the effort they put in.
- **Film teams and others working in the creative economy should set a fee structure** for their participation in speaking gigs, strategy convenings, mentorship, and other work that draws on their hard-earned experience and expertise. The fees can always be waived when needed, but this establishes an important industry standard and practice.
- **Funders and film teams should compensate non-salaried consultants** especially, for their participation in meetings, workshops, and summits, for advising or other work. This creates career sustainability for vulnerable freelancers working in a growing gig-economy.

— **Film teams should value and adequately compensate** (through decision-making power, financing, capacity building, and/or other means) the individuals and communities whose stories they share—for the intellectual and emotional labour, stories, and expertise they borrow—to avoid extractive storytelling models and ensure an equitable relationship from the start (we will be exploring this further in the **Section on Emancipatory Practice**).

Does the list spark anything in you? What ideas do you have for the sustainability of the film impact field? We want to hear from you: [impactguide@docsociety.org](mailto:impactguide@docsociety.org)

Now that we've opened up the questions about field sustainability and equity, it's time to talk about impact budgets.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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## Further reading

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THE FOLLOWING STUDIES OFFER VALUABLE CONTEXT ABOUT THE STATE OF THE DOCUMENTARY FIELD IN GENERAL:

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**The State of the Documentary Field: 2018 Study of Documentary Professionals**  
[cmsimpact.org/report/state-documentary-field-2018-study-documentary-professionals](https://cmsimpact.org/report/state-documentary-field-2018-study-documentary-professionals)

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**2017 State Of The Field: A Report From The Documentary Sustainability Summit**  
[arts.gov/sites/default/files/DocSummitReport2017\\_0.pdf](https://arts.gov/sites/default/files/DocSummitReport2017_0.pdf)

AND FOR IMPACT PRODUCER SPECIFIC RESEARCH...

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**While you're at it, you probably want to check out Kamal Sinclair's Making a New Reality, which explores equity in new media and interventions to ensure it.**  
[immerse.news/making-a-new-reality-625b78aeb1c5](https://immerse.news/making-a-new-reality-625b78aeb1c5)



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## BUILD IMPACT INTO BUDGETS

**Y**ou're making a brilliant film and figuring out a really clever and effective impact campaign. You've got commitment from your team. Now it's time to turn to the thorniest issue of them all: how you're going to finance your campaign.



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We need to start by acknowledging here that much of what you'll eventually be able to do is going to be reliant on the funds you have available to do it. And that, despite the frankly heroic efforts of filmmakers to bring change to the world, the reality is that many impact campaigns run out of funds well before the team has run out of steam.

Of the filmmakers we surveyed, 90% said raising money for impact campaigns is a major challenge and most said they wanted to learn more about costing out campaigns.

It's not all doom and gloom. As the field continues to prove itself with ever more successful campaigns demonstrated, we are seeing more organisations prepared to fund this type of work. Which, of course, leads to more brilliant impact campaigns. Which leads to more funds being set aside... and so on.

Across the case studies in our **Library**, you'll see that the budgets ranged from \$53,000 to \$2.6M. That's not to say that those with comparatively tiny budgets didn't also do an amazing job. You can still do a lot with a little bit of money and a cracking strategy, so don't be put off. It just means that the less money you have, the less time you've likely got to spend, and the more important strategy is to ensure you're using resources effectively - because you have less capacity to experiment and throw things at the wall to see what will stick.

We recommend that filmmakers develop impact plans and corresponding budgets as early-on as possible. The stronger the early visioning, the more traction the funding will have later on. A well-articulated impact plan can even help secure production funding.

This section of the module will hopefully guide you through the process of budgeting to turn your 'ideal' impact campaign into a real-life entity.



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## DEVELOPING YOUR 'IDEAL' IMPACT BUDGET

Before we get down to actually putting the figures in the cells, let's take a moment to consider this great advice from Tricia Finneran, an impact producer and president of Story Matters who has worked on the impact distribution of countless films including *Bully*, *How to Survive a Plague* and *The Revolutionary Optimists*. She previously worked with the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program and is a member of the Good Pitch team.

### 'MONEY, MONEY, MONEY...'

Yes, you can access all kinds of non-financial resources to ensure your movie makes a difference, but you will need some money to make it happen. First up, put together an impact budget to support the outreach and engagement work that is separate from the film production budget.

### WHY?

Some funders, in particular public broadcasters, prohibit spending on impact-related activities. Other public media funders will simply require separate budgets.

Conversely, some funders such as the Fledgling Fund exclusively fund outreach and engagement work and will want to see the activity broken down.

If you have equity financing in your film, your production budget should only include the cost of delivering the film.

## STEPS TO TAKE:

- 1. Write down everything you want to do** — with estimated costs attached to each item. Don't worry about being realistic; just begin.
- 2. Ask colleagues for their budgets as a reference.** (Hint: tell them to strip out salary specifics and they will likely be happy to help.) While projects vary widely, the core elements are similar. These will encourage you to include expenses you may not have considered.
- 3. Assess how much time it would take you and your core team to accomplish your plan.** What's the best use of your time? Would it be better to hire others to do certain things?
- 4. What resources do you already have and what can partner organisations offer you for free?** For example, would a non-profit partner host a launch event or contribute to a screening guide?
- 5. Assess the funding landscape.** In a best-case scenario, how much could you raise to support your campaign?

The budget will evolve as you assess the time and resources you have on hand, the likelihood of raising funds, and the resources and opportunities that partnerships will bring to your campaign.

To help you get started, [here's a rewritable budget](#) that will help prompt your thinking. It is set up to a maximum of £250,00 but can be scaled up or down depending on how much financial and in-kind support you are able to secure.

**“[Funders & Partners] bring tremendous knowledge, networks, analytical skills, money and other resources to social change efforts; they need these films to put human faces on the issues they deal with, because doing so helps them build public awareness and influence public will.”**

Active Voice



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Some impact campaign funding categories that you'll likely need to account for include:

- Campaign personnel: from strategy development and campaign oversight, including the filmmakers' involvement, to impact assessment and reporting
- Administrative expenses: from travel and shipping costs to legal and accounting support
- Ancillary content: from building a website and discussion materials to creating video modules or subtitled versions of the film
- Event costs: from DVD replication and honoraria for panelists to catering, promotion, and materials for specific events or gatherings
- Covering screening licenses for certain partners (so they can make the film available to communities who couldn't afford it otherwise, but so filmmakers are also compensated for their work)

Think about preparing a few different versions of your budget based on different scenarios. This gives you a way to think big (and prepare for the worst!) without tempting fate.

Remember, as with everything in this process, budgeting is not something you do once and leave to one side. You'll need to constantly revisit your budget in the light of the campaign's organic development - including dropping things that aren't working for you, and upweighting the elements that are doing well.

**PRO TIP:** don't forget to build in compensation for time and effort, whether it's for yourself, to hire the people to execute the impact plan, or both. Often, this is the last thing filmmakers will include - but funders want to know you will actually have the capacity to do the work funded by those other line items!

Wrap your head around fiscal Sponsorship: your campaign has a social or environmental change goal and may meet the requirement of a non-profit. That means you can access philanthropic support that was not available to your production! (In the U.S., if you are applying for foundation funds and are not a non-profit, you will need a fiscal sponsor such as [\*\*Women Makes Movies\*\*](#), [\*\*Fractured Atlas\*\*](#) or the [\*\*International Documentary Association\*\*](#) in order to accept certain philanthropic funds).

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**BEEN THERE, DONE THAT:  
SOME ‘WATCH OUTS’  
FROM FILMMAKERS:**

*“Ensure there is budget in the impact work for subjects’ travel, hotel, food at festivals, the theatrical run & screening tour.”*

Sandi DuBowski  
*Trembling Before G-d*



*“For people who are not familiar with the costs of running an impact campaign, it can be surprising when filmmakers keep raising money for a film that is ‘already finished.’ Having an open, honest and early conversation with your film crew, protagonists, and partnering organisations about the need to continue fundraising after the film is released will serve you well when you are successful and the money starts coming in.”*

Julia Bacha  
*Just Vision*

*“In the initial stage of the campaign, we had some valuable strategic and policy advice from one of our funders, who ended up introducing us to other consultants who eventually became part of our campaign team.”*

*Bag It*

*“Don’t forget to budget for things like additional printing costs. Things like badges and other campaign collateral can catch you out.”*

Marty Syjuco & Michael Collins  
*Give Up Tomorrow*





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## FIND THE RIGHT FUNDERS

Our community is pretty familiar with the small group of funders whose core purpose is funding film: Sundance Institute, Doc Society, Tribeca Film Institute, Chicken & Egg, Southern Documentary Fund, San Francisco Film Society, IDA and Catapult Film Fund to name but a few, as well as all the national film funds — Danish Film Institute, Australian Film Institute, British Film Institute — and broadcasters who are still enthusiastic production partners for feature docs — SVT, POV, Independent Lens, ITVS, BBC Storyville, HBO, Arte/ZDF, YLE etc.



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There is also a broader and growing group of funders, from large institutional foundations such as Ford or MacArthur Foundation, to smaller foundations such as Perspective Foundation and Bertha Foundation, as well as specific funders such as Wellcome Trust (biomedical projects), Arcus Foundation (LGBT and environmental projects), Fritt Ord (to promote Freedom of Expression) or individual philanthropists and even brands such as

Patagonia, who also fund film impact campaigns (not necessarily as their core purpose, but because it furthers their aims and priorities). Some have film funds allocated within their organisation. Others may only fund film in exceptional circumstances, on a case by case basis. Have a look at three very different examples to get an idea of the range of funders out there:

AMERICAN PROMISE	GIVE UP TOMORROW	ESCAPE FIRE
<p><b>PRODUCTION FUNDING</b> ITVS POV Sundance Documentary Fund San Francisco Film Society Tribeca Gucci Documentary Fund Jerome Foundation National Black Programming Consortium New York State Council on the Arts</p> <p><b>OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT FUNDING</b> Open Society Foundations Kellogg Foundation The Fledgling Fund Ford Foundation Corporation for Public Broadcasting / American Graduate Initiative (through POV)</p>	<p><b>PRODUCTION FUNDING</b> ITVS POV BBC Sundance Documentary Film Program CAAM (Center for Asian American Media) The Fledgling Fund NYSCA Jerome Foundation DR Denmark Gucci Tribeca Producer’s Contributions</p> <p><b>OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT FUNDING</b> Bertha Doc Society Connect Fund The Fledgling Fund POV IndieGoGo</p>	<p><b>PRODUCTION FUNDING</b> IndieGoGo Sundance Institute’s Documentary Fund Valerie Beth Schwartz Foundation Private investor</p> <p><b>OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT FUNDING</b> Christy and John Mack Foundation The California Endowment The Fledgling Fund Valerie Beth Schwartz Foundation Fair Winds Foundation SHOUTAmerica Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)</p>



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## WHAT ARE THE REASONS THAT FUNDERS SUPPORT IMPACT CAMPAIGNS?

Funders who have supported a feature length documentary will do so for a variety of reasons, including of course artistic merit. But the most common reason funders cite for supporting impact campaigns is that it is a good way to fulfil the funder's objectives in terms of the change they want to see in the world – changing minds, structures, communities or behaviours.

So, identifying funders who share your impact goals is key, and will help you secure funding against the criteria that funders set out. Your Strategic Plan will help you with this. Head back to the planning session to refresh your memory.

## REALITY CHECK

Across all the funders we surveyed, the majority of grants given for production and for impact campaigns were under \$75k. This is a useful reality check against the budget you have laid out in the previous section. Certainly, it's an indication of the numbers of funding partners you may need in order to support the work, and the imperative to create multi-year funding relationships.

Funding through many foundations requires real planning, given that most grant cycles take several months between the initial proposal and the actual grant award. Many applications have multiple rounds where additional material is requested and funders may contact you for revisions, clarification or other questions in the interim. Funders may only have one or two calls for proposals per year, so map out on a calendar the upcoming dates for proposals you

want to submit. (Hint: deadlines in future years will generally occur around the same time even if you don't know the exact date, so you can still plan ahead).

But don't limit yourself to the MacArthur and Ford foundations of the world. Small family foundations are often overlooked. They don't have fancy websites or visibility, or even formal application processes, but they can be approached individually, can turn around funding on shorter timelines and may be excited to fund an out-of-the-box project about a local issue. In the United States, [\*\*The Foundation Center\*\*](#) is an excellent place to look for family foundations in your area. [\*\*European Foundation Centre\*\*](#), [\*\*Donor & Foundation Networks in Europe\*\*](#), [\*\*Alliance Magazine\*\*](#) are also all useful sources of information and research.

Do let us know if there are others we should add to this list.

Whether their portfolios are large or small, some of the non-traditional or non-film industry funders are very experienced working with filmmakers. Others have only recently begun supporting documentary films and are still testing the water. These are the individuals making the case internally for the support of film and so are under real pressure to deliver. It's just worth acknowledging the differences between these kinds of funders, to be mindful of their level of knowledge and internal needs.

Have a look at Active Voice Lab's excellent resource [\*\*The Prenups\*\*](#), which you'll also find in our [\*\*Library\*\*](#). Focused on the relationship between funders and filmmakers, it offers invaluable advice about how to build a partnership that works for both parties.



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Here's our five bullet point sneak-peek of the Prenups Guide to whet your appetite:

- **Clarify goals** and ask whether they overlap, differ, or conflict
- **Define needs and expectations** on both sides at the outset
- **Talk** about respective roles and the level of involvement desired
- **Identify the risks and contingencies** — there will be some
- **Make it explicit** – put your agreements in writing

Do read the [Team](#) and [Budget](#) sections of this module to get your thinking straight before applying, and to be very realistic about what you promise!

#### WHAT FUNDERS EXPECT IN RETURN

Getting a funder to commit to your project can take months of work, but in the experience of many producers, once they do provide initial funding, they are often willing to continue adding resources to the project as its impact campaign progresses.

It's so important that you continue to maintain a process of updating them on the film and campaign's progress, and to keep them aware of your evolving needs. Send good news but also alert them to a change in direction or a slip in timeframe. If you take the time to make your partners and funders feel like part of the inner circle, you

never know what rewards you could reap down the line.

To quote our very own Doc Society partnership guru, Mr. Sandi DuBowski:

*'Be truly grateful and generous. Take your lead supporters to dinner. Send handwritten thank you notes. Give flowers. Thank supporters publicly at screenings, in printed and online materials. It seems so basic, yet people forget.'*

Funders are way more than a cheque book. They are partners who may become major allies to you and to the movement. They can unlock far more important resources than just money. For one, they can make the case to other funders.

Of course there is also likely to be formal reporting required. Your funders will want to know what has happened with their resources, and will expect you to demonstrate how your campaign has fulfilled its objectives.

Funders should accept, and film teams should build-in, variability statements alongside their impact statements to account for inevitable changes in the campaign. This allows for necessary flexibility and experimentation. We'll tackle this in more detail in the [Measuring Impact chapter](#) — How to report effectively and appropriately.

So now, let's focus more deeply on how to identify and make great partnerships.





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## BUILD EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to impact campaign funders there is a whole constellation of partners who would be keen to learn about your film. The reason they are most likely be interested in partnership is due to their shared interest in the issue you are trying to highlight.



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We might think of them as sitting outside the documentary film ecosystem – campaigners, philanthropists, brands, media, policymakers, foundations or NGOs. But they don't have to be. And in the context of film impact space, they probably shouldn't be! These partners can enrich the campaign in a plethora of different ways outside of monetary support, from arranging meetings with key stakeholders, to setting up non-theatrical screenings, or lobbying the media.

The right partners can offer your team valuable context about the issues, solutions, and target communities. They can help make your engagement efforts stronger and more relevant. If they trust in your efforts, they can become your trusted messenger with the audiences that you need to engage.

In other words, the right partnerships can extend the campaign's reach, deepen its efforts, and amplify its voice. In short, what they can offer is priceless.

In the case of *American Promise*, the film team spent

considerable time getting organisations and foundations invested in the film, mobilising a total of 66 national partner organisations and 118 community organisations around the release. This advanced engagement proved invaluable when it came to spreading the word about the theatrical release, rolling out the community screening programme and engaging audiences around the campaign.

Likewise, *No Fire Zone* worked closely with national and international partners including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group and many Tamil organisations who made a huge contribution by organising high level influencer screenings in a number of key territories pivotal to the campaign strategy.

The *Virunga* campaign was the result of a long-term and coordinated collaboration between the film and the Virunga National Park. They worked together and built a plan to ensure that the park would be a source of peace and prosperity in the region. The first key part of their strategy to achieve this was to highlight activities that might impede that, such as oil extraction, and stop them. The next part of their strategy was to point to the alternatives (such as hydroelectric plants) and inspire people to see that Virunga could be so much more. And finally, to build those alternatives and the support needed to ensure the park's success over the long-term. The *Virunga* film and campaign stopped the existential threats (of oil exploration and extraction) and made sure the park would survive long enough to get there. The film team continues to work closely with the Virunga Alliance to continue their efforts to achieve this shared vision.

Let's look for a second at when educational charity



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**Facing History and Ourselves** (an educational nonprofit that engages students in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-semitism) attended **Good Pitch**. They were so taken with the Bully documentary that they offered to create a free downloadable learning guide and online training resource to accompany the film, as well as introducing the film to 3500 educators as part of One Million Kids. As well as that, they introduced the *Bully* team to their own funder, the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, who ended up becoming a major funder for the *Bully* project.

Or perhaps when The Innocence Project were so moved by *Give Up Tomorrow* that they set up a new organisation called the Philippines Innocence Project to work on reforming the nation's criminal justice system. Here's what the filmmakers had to say about securing the partnership:

*“With Give Up Tomorrow we really really wanted to work with the Innocence Project.*

*We are big fans of their work and what they've accomplished: exonerating hundreds of wrongfully convicted prisoners, many of them from death row.*

*They are such a perfect fit for our campaign, as they champion others victims just like our main character Paco. We tried desperately to reach out to them, but they didn't know us, and as you can imagine are extremely busy saving lives.*

*We were invited to do a screening with Philanthropy NY hosted by Ford Foundation's JustFilms. JustFilms asked us who would be good candidates to join the panel discussion afterwards. Here was a great*

*opportunity to invite the Innocence Project. JustFilms sent them an invitation, and they accepted! Finally they had a chance to see the film on the big screen at the Paley Center for Media with a sold out audience, and that's all it took. They recognised that our issues were aligned and our film was able to convey the same message they do. A few days after the screening, we were invited to their offices in downtown New York to brainstorm how to work together.”*

The *Escape Fire* filmmakers approached healthcare foundations, but then also started to think about how the campaign would play with the military. They met the head of the US army's Pain Management Task Force and the Department of Veteran Affairs at Good Pitch, who helped arrange screenings for military personnel, and the team also managed to secure screenings at The Pentagon, Capitol Hill, and the Department of Defense, hosted by the Surgeon General of the US Army.

Sometimes, a film becomes the face of an organisation. *Miners Shot Down*, which provided an alternative narrative to the one the government was spinning about the Marikana massacre, became the face of the Marikana Support Campaign. And *The Invisible War* became the face of Protect Our Defenders.

Similarly, *Please Remember Me* became the face of a network to support families grappling with Dementia and Alzhiemer's in China. Prior to their film campaign, there was no national network, so their corresponding Memory 2030 campaign became a hub to connect existing support facilities and programs. To do this effectively, they knew they would need a couple of key partners to weigh in on the campaign strategy. So they pulled in Jin



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Mei, who organises family visits for elderly care patients, and Jian Ai, an expert on early care and prevention. They also knew that they needed an Impact Producer who was an expert on elderly care with a government background.

The result? An app that helps families to identify the resources they need, which grows by the day, and over 250 screenings held by organisations that they pulled into their network. These ranged from hospitals and nursing schools to city governments and even pharmaceutical companies. The over 25,000 audience members who attended these screenings were informed of available support.

This smart partnership strategy not only won them a government endorsement of their campaign, but it also led to government-supported campaigns for Dementia and Alzheimer’s care. The film team is now working on a second ITVS-supported film about a Shanghai Opera Director who is battling Alzheimer’s. Because they formed this network, which continues to be active due to the efforts of a committed Impact Producer, they now have a network that is ready to be activated around this next film.

#### Some food for thought:

There is tremendous possibility for all kinds of powerful partnerships around film - but you need to be diligent and attentive to the landscape that you’re operating in. For example, while it’s a hard thing to track for certain, anecdotal evidence suggests that at the present moment in the U.S., the social change landscape is flooded with story-based media. Social movement organisations can get inundated with partnership requests. So be clear

about what you want and what you’re offering. The best partnerships are the ones where you don’t need to convince them of the value of your story to their work.

Also, be honest about whether you want a partner or a customer. Partners have a working relationship towards a common goal or interest. Often a partnership is built on some level of trust and shared understanding. In a partnership, both parties are bringing something of value to the table. But customer relationships are mostly transactional. You have something to sell (your film) and they want to buy it. Done and done. Knowing the difference allows you to approach a person or group with more transparency.

#### FINDING PERFECT PARTNERS

So now here’s an exercise and a practical tool to help you identify partners and to organise and manage these relationships effectively. Although various contacts databases exist, and these do all sorts of whizzy things, our own version is a simple spreadsheet which we hope can be used by everybody, regardless of budget or technical ability.

This picks up from your issue map – but now it’s time to do the job a little more systematically, and to keep a record while you’re doing it. There are six steps to building and maintaining the **Partnership Contact Log**:



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## 1.

Let's go back to our issue map, where we scanned the issue thoroughly and mapped the issue landscape (if you skipped this section, go back to it [here](#)). From this, you can begin to develop a long list of organisations (and, wherever possible, named individuals in those organisations) to add to your partnership contact log. You might find the following useful as a research prompt:

- **RESEARCH** the history of distribution and the impact campaigns of previous films in the field. Look at film credit lists, study films' campaign websites, social media and press.
- **LEARN** who the key stakeholders and funders were. Study which organisations sponsored screenings, who sat on post-screening panels and who led Q&A's. Read final campaign and funder reports.
- **ASK** whether the campaign achieved its goals and how those goals evolved and changed over time. Learn whether the stakeholders found it a positive and effective experience. For some, it may have been a waste of their time, resources and organisational energy.
- **STUDY** the field of the issue itself, not just the films. See where there is collaboration among organisations and funders and where there are turf wars between organisations.
- **COLLABORATE** with films on a similar subject where possible. Working Films institutionalised this practice with the Reel Engagement initiative: thematic collections of documentary media that turn competition into collaboration and show how groups of films on the same issue can make a stronger impact together than they can apart (Reel Aging, Reel Energy, Reel Education).

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## 2.

Once you have a list, it's worth carrying out some basic analysis of these potential partners, in order to understand their strengths:

- **TYPE OF ORGANISATION:** International, national or local? Size of organisation?
- **CONSTITUENCY:** youth, business leaders, women, rural, paid memberships, mailing list signup, website visitors, Facebook/Twitter followers?
- **EXPERIENCE IN FILM PARTNERSHIP:** First time or veteran? Resistant to film or embracing?
- **LIKELIHOOD OF PARTNERSHIP:** Aligned with the issue, outlier or unexpected?
- **PARTNER POWER ASSESSMENT:** Issue field leader or less influential?
- **HOW OR WHERE DOES PARTNER DEPLOY POWER:** Lobbying, grassroots campaign, support services, elite influencers, publications, cause fundraising, social media, conferences, offline or online partnership (ie: Avaaz, Change.org, AllOut.org etc)?



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## 3.

**Think about and then list what you might, in an ideal world, get from each potential partnership.**

#### DURING PRODUCTION:

- Sharing research materials & access to experts
- Access to photographic or film archive
- Access to local operations which can help logistics
- Access to stories/ contributors for your film
- Introductions to prospective funders
- Promote the film to mailing lists/memberships
- Promote crowdsourcing campaigns
- Give feedback on rough cuts
- Help you develop your Impact Goals and Strategy

#### AFTER FILM IS COMPLETED:

- Promote the film to mailing lists/memberships.
- Drive donors to give to a cause
- Use the film as a training tool
- Use the film as a lobbying tool
- \* Use the film as a teaching tool
- Create a study guide/ discussion guide for the film
- Integrate the film into ongoing campaign work
- Organise membership screenings or high level influencer screenings.
- Show the film at annual events/conferences.
- Fund press and PR work around the film.
- Introductions to prospective funders
- Share or create web resources to amplify the film's impact
- Sell the DVD to members and others

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## 4.

#### **Prioritise.**

From an impact perspective, what expertise and capacities do you need most on your campaign?

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## 5.

#### **Update constantly.**

Keep using it and update after every conversation, or at least make a note to update as a team on a regular basis. Put alarms in your calendar to make sure you do.

It's vital you keep on top of this – it'll give you a really clear idea of where you're at, and what other opportunities exist.

#### **DOWNLOAD**

PARTNERSHIP CONTACT LOG

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## 6.

#### **So now we've got a list. But how to start?**

These people are not film people. Will they understand how we work as artists? Will they value us as change makers? Will they overvalue us?





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#### OUR TOP TIPS ARE:

##### PICK UP THE PHONE AND GET STARTED!

For all the advice we can give, there's no substitute for getting on the phone (far better than email or social media, though Twitter can be great for making contact and for finding the right individuals). Call people. A lot of people. It works for us.

##### INSPIRE FIRST, CONVERT LATER.

This can take the pressure off you as well – feeling like every conversation has to directly lead to something will put you on edge, and that in turn will put your prospective partner on edge. Start by finding common ground and sharing your passion for the issue.

Your impact vision might come in handy here. You'll find that people want to talk to you if you start from this level and ask them to respond, rather than asking for money or support right off.

Finding common ground also means that you LISTEN for their vision and what their priorities are, too.

##### LOOK FOR THE RIGHT INDIVIDUALS.

Often we've found that the organisations which really ought to get involved in a film project, don't; and organisations whose link is less obvious, do. It often comes down to the individual. Find the right person, and if you don't see the spark in their eye, ask yourself whether you're ever going to.

##### START SMALL.

Small asks can go a long way. Deliver results and build from there. A small ask lets you test the waters and get a better understanding of each other's value. Partners (or funders) can see the direct impact in the shorter term, and become more deeply engaged in the project and its potential.

##### PARTNER WELL.

Building strong and effective partnerships requires clear and effective communication. Prenups for Partners is a brand new resource by Active Voice Lab (just released in late 2018) designed to help stakeholders navigate sometimes tricky decisions. It builds upon the Prenups referenced above to include changemakers such as activists, nonprofits and issue experts. Here's a peek at some key themes to address at the outset:

**Mission:** Why are we working together?

**Method:** How will we design and implement our collaboration?

**Money:** Who's paying for what?

**Mobility:** What happens when things change?

#### GEEK OUT

IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

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Once you've forged the terms of your partnership together with shared expectations and goals, you might find it useful to have a look at this excellent **sample Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) between filmmakers and nonprofits, which could be a useful template for other types of partnership agreement too. Thanks to Molly Murphy, Co-Director of Working Films, for sharing it for use in the Field Guide.

In that same spirit, we love Gillian Caldwell's super-smart checklist for what it takes to maintain successful partnerships, as shared at Working Films & The Fledgling Fund's REEL CHANGE training. It's tough to go wrong if you have:

- Shared vision
- Clear expectations regarding roles and responsibilities
- A system for communication with clear points of contact
- Active honesty
- Awareness of power
- Willingness to submerge identity/share credit
- Flexibility and willingness to readjust
- Trust
- Respect
- Love

Putting your **Strategic Plan** into action is about assembling people and parts. The configuration of your team is entirely dependent on, and should be proportional to, the scale of your project and available resources. As with your motivations and vision, there's ultimately no wrong answer - just what you decide it takes to get the job done. Thinking ahead about each of these pieces of the puzzle will help you to develop a timeline for production, engagement and distribution.

Up next, we figure out what distribution looks like for your unique plan.



*“As you go about working on your films and campaigns, remember to always keep a positive attitude. An attitude of gratitude.”*

Marty Syjuco & Michael Collins,  
Filmmakers, *Give Up Tomorrow*



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# Geek out

## Further reading

### 3.9



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**Dig into the Prenups for Partners here:**

[activevoice.net/prenups/prenups-for-partners](https://activevoice.net/prenups/prenups-for-partners)

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**Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment**

[thestateofsie.com](https://thestateofsie.com)

Check out this report from the Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment which includes a chart of the field of social impact entertainment and the companies and organisations that work to advance it. An amazing visualisation of partners and partnership.



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# 4.0 IMPACT DISTRIBUTION



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## WHAT IS IMPACT DISTRIBUTION?

**Y**our film is ready to go out into the world. There are many paths to audiences, but which is right for you?



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Possibly your film will launch at a festival, or perhaps have a theatrical run. Maybe you're hoping for international TV sales, and wondering which platforms you should be using online? Maybe you'll hand your film over to a distributor. Maybe you won't get any decent distribution offers. Or, given the possibilities of the digital age, maybe you'll decide to self-distribute, meaning that you'll take on the bulk of the work calling theatres, calling universities, and reaching out to press (more on this below). Maybe you'll do a bit of both. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

The fact that this is an impact project adds even more opportunity and even more complexity. Given your impact goals and your partnerships, your priority may be working with community organisers to equip them in their changemaking. Or perhaps you are focused on effective political lobbying around the release. It all depends on what makes sense for your film and issue.

This chapter is intended to help you navigate the distribution landscape to figure out what kind of distribution is right for your impact campaign. To get the film seen as widely as possible AND to get it seen by the right people, in the right way, in order to achieve the right results.

We call this “Impact Distribution.”

**IN THIS CHAPTER:**

We'll start by defining Impact Distribution in a little more detail.

We'll look at some different ways to strike the right deal for your needs – sketching out a spectrum, from keeping it simple and handing it over completely to a distributor at one extreme, to doing it mostly yourself at the other – using case studies to illustrate the points along the way.

We'll look at some of the main distribution pathways, annotated with considerations related to impact and engagement, as well as the strongest players in different geographies.

We'll break down some of the core Impact Distribution activities that should not be underestimated, such as



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in-person events, lobbying or online campaigning, and get you some ‘been there, done that’ advice from the experts.

And finally, we’ll help you draw up a quick checklist for your film – in case you get a distribution offer and need to make a decision fast .

**DISTRIBUTION VS IMPACT: IT NEEDN'T BE THIS WAY**

Traditionally, distribution and impact were thought of as separate issues – and they came in that order. You made a film, you sold it to a distributor or a broadcaster and then, separately, you organised some impact work, probably calling it ‘outreach’.

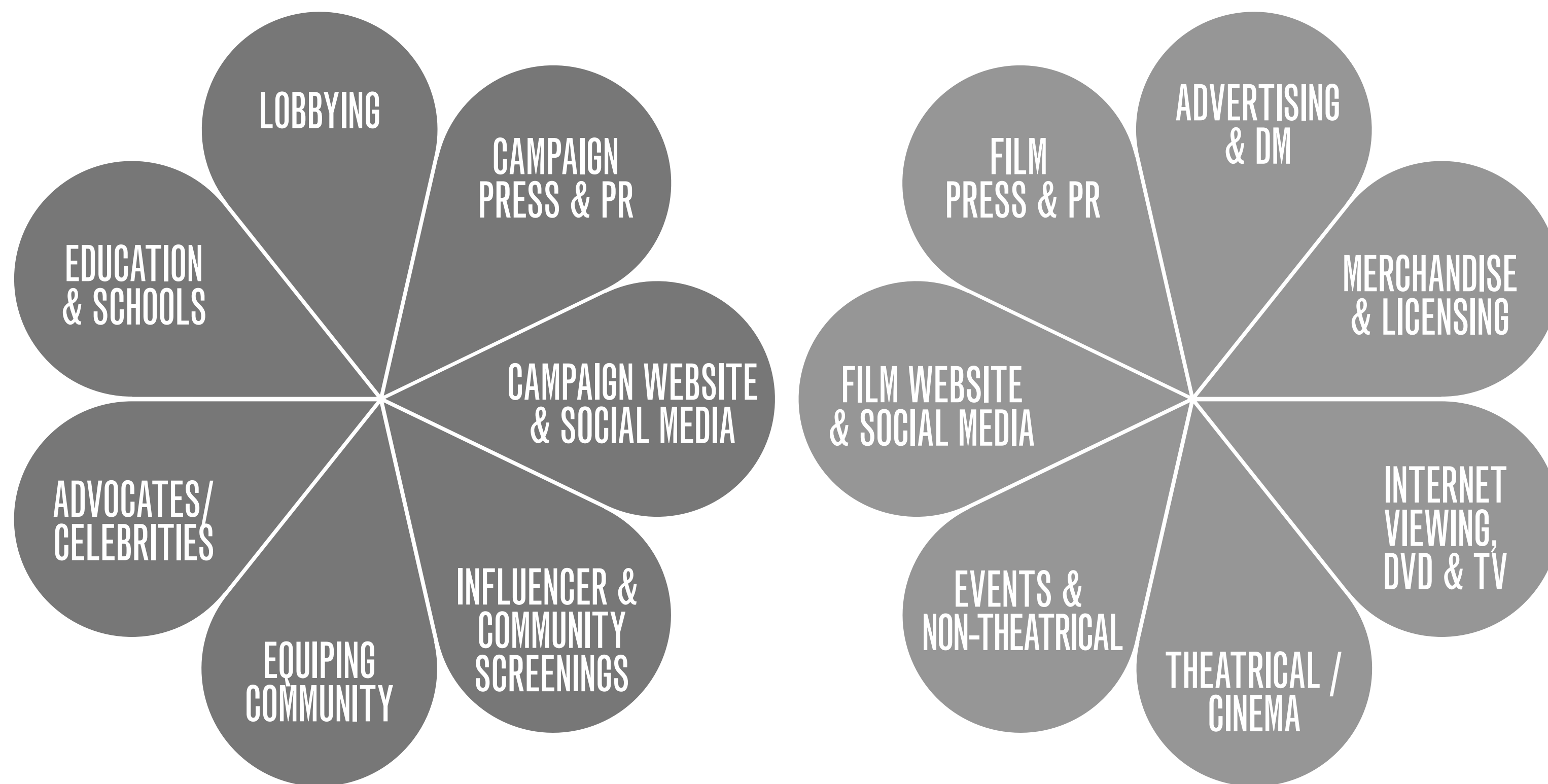
**THERE WERE TWO SEPARATE QUESTIONS:**

Distribution asked ‘How can we sell the film to as many people as possible, making as much money as possible?’

Impact asked ‘How can we get the film to the people who really need to see it, so that we can make the most impact?’

The answers led to two separate spheres of activity, distribution and impact, usually carried out by separate teams, which at best was highly inefficient and at worst could lead to outright conflict.



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**IMPACT VS DISTRIBUTION**  
 Uncoordinated, Competitive, Inefficient



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At worst, a distributor worries that the impact work will undermine their marketing of the film, associating it with social issues that they believe will make the film less attractive to general audiences and giving the film away to people that they would like to sell it to. Some of these worries may be justified.

At worst, the impact team worries that the distributor doesn't care about their social goals, and will treat the people who need to see the film as simply a market to be sold to, rather than a community to be engaged and supported - they will market the film in a way that's cheesy or off-putting to the experts or the affected communities they want to work with. Some of these worries may be justified.

Some of the common points of tension can include:

#### **TIMING**

There are typically a variety of factors that go into what would make timing optimal or suboptimal. It's a dance between when the distributor may think it's most commercially advantageous to put the film out, versus when the impact team needs to, based around what's happening socially or politically. The optimal positioning is rarely clear cut.

#### **FREE SCREENINGS**

Sometimes distributors will resist these or only allow them much later - so if that's the case for you, be prepared to negotiate. Otherwise it can mean missing out on screening at key conferences or meetings, or not being able to engage audiences who won't or can't see the film when it comes out due to cost, access, or other factors. But in some cases the opposite is true. For example: some

public media programs, such as POV and ITVS in the U.S., have engagement initiatives of their own at which they do not charge audiences. Indie Lens Pop Up for Independent Lens Films is an example. It depends on the distributor, so be sure to ask.

#### **MESSAGING**

Who gets to place stories about the film in the media and speak for the film? Often, you'll need to negotiate the right balance between setting a tone that creates buzz and one that helps engage target audiences (or at least not alienate them). This can be true even with mission-oriented distributors who must nonetheless prioritise sales, or who can be wary of rocking the boat too much.

#### **PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING**

Who is responsible for getting the word out about the film and bringing audiences to the platforms? Some distributors see this as a part of their job. Others see this as the job of the film team.

#### **WEBSITE, FACEBOOK AND TWITTER**

Who owns these channels and are they intended for selling the film, running the engagement effort, or both? What happens to these channels when the film's distribution life has slowed, but impact and engagement activities continue?

#### **CHANNELS OF DISTRIBUTION**

Where is your film going to be seen and is that right for your strategic audience? The platform that offers the most money might not be one that the people you want to see your film use.

The good news is, there's a better way.

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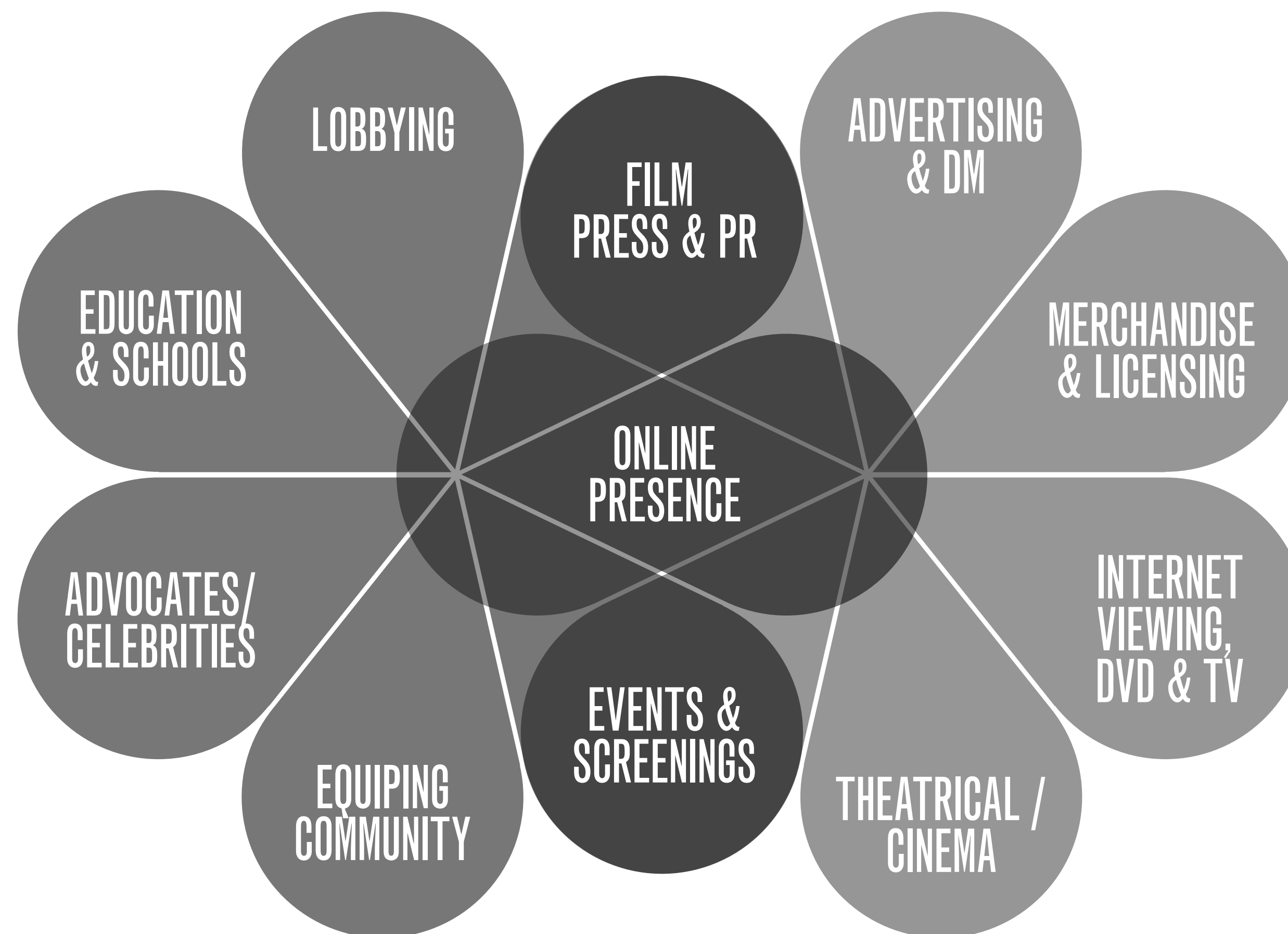
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**IMPACT VS DISTRIBUTION**  
Mutually beneficial, Cost effective and Efficient

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**“The first question I’d ask of yourself is what is your goal in distribution? Is it to make money? Is it to get accolades? Is it to get the film the widest possible audience? These things occasionally coincide, but I wouldn’t expect it. I’d also think about who your audience is. Is it easily identifiable (and reachable)? What are you looking for a distributor to bring to the table?”**

Morgan Neville, Director  
*20 Feet from Stardom*



## DISTRIBUTION + IMPACT: WIN WIN

It’s certainly worth starting with the examples of global broadcasters who have embraced audience engagement as a deep strategy - not least as a standard to negotiate against with those stations who are less willing or uninitiated in the idea of audience engagement and outreach! Let’s start with the big daddy of them all.



### PBS, USA

This US public broadcaster PBS operates as a non-profit funded by the US government, corporations, foundations and individuals. All proposed funding has to match the PBS criteria to ensure that it is free of influence from the funding source and its content is impartial. It has 354 local member stations and is the only national station to have reach in every one of the USA’s 50 states. It can be seen by 97% of the American viewing public (everyone with access to a television set).

PBS has a number of flagship documentary strands (such as **Frontline** screening long-form news investigations, **Independent Lens** showing an eclectic mix of award-winning feature documentaries and **Nova** focussing on in-depth science programming) but POV, with its emphasis on first person and social-issue films, is the longest running showcase on US television for independent documentary films since it launched in 1988. Last season, POV averaged 2.5 million viewers per episode. With the 32nd season on PBS beginning in early 2019, they are veterans of working with audience engagement.



### POV, USA

Each curated season of 16 documentaries has a bespoke communications and engagement campaign for every film in the series, the shape of which is determined by the existing plans of the film team at the point of the co-production funding or acquisition. In some cases, existing (sometimes huge) plans are already in place, a legacy from festival and cinematic release, so the team at POV will create outreach and engagement strategies to complement these. In other cases, the team start from scratch.

Whilst POV deploys traditional broadcast marketing tactics in the form of PR and social media delivering viewing figures, a specific audience engagement team focuses on identifying and reaching specific communities and demographics connected to the documentaries

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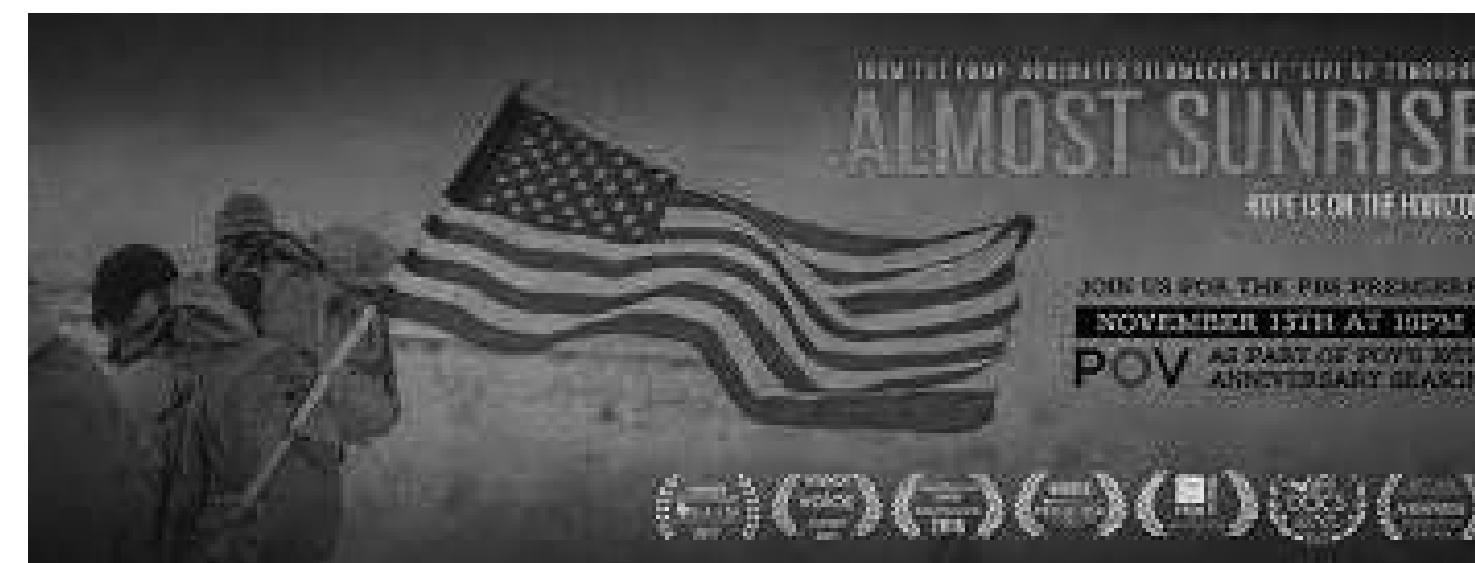
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showcased in each season, to deepen their engagement with the films and their subject matter.

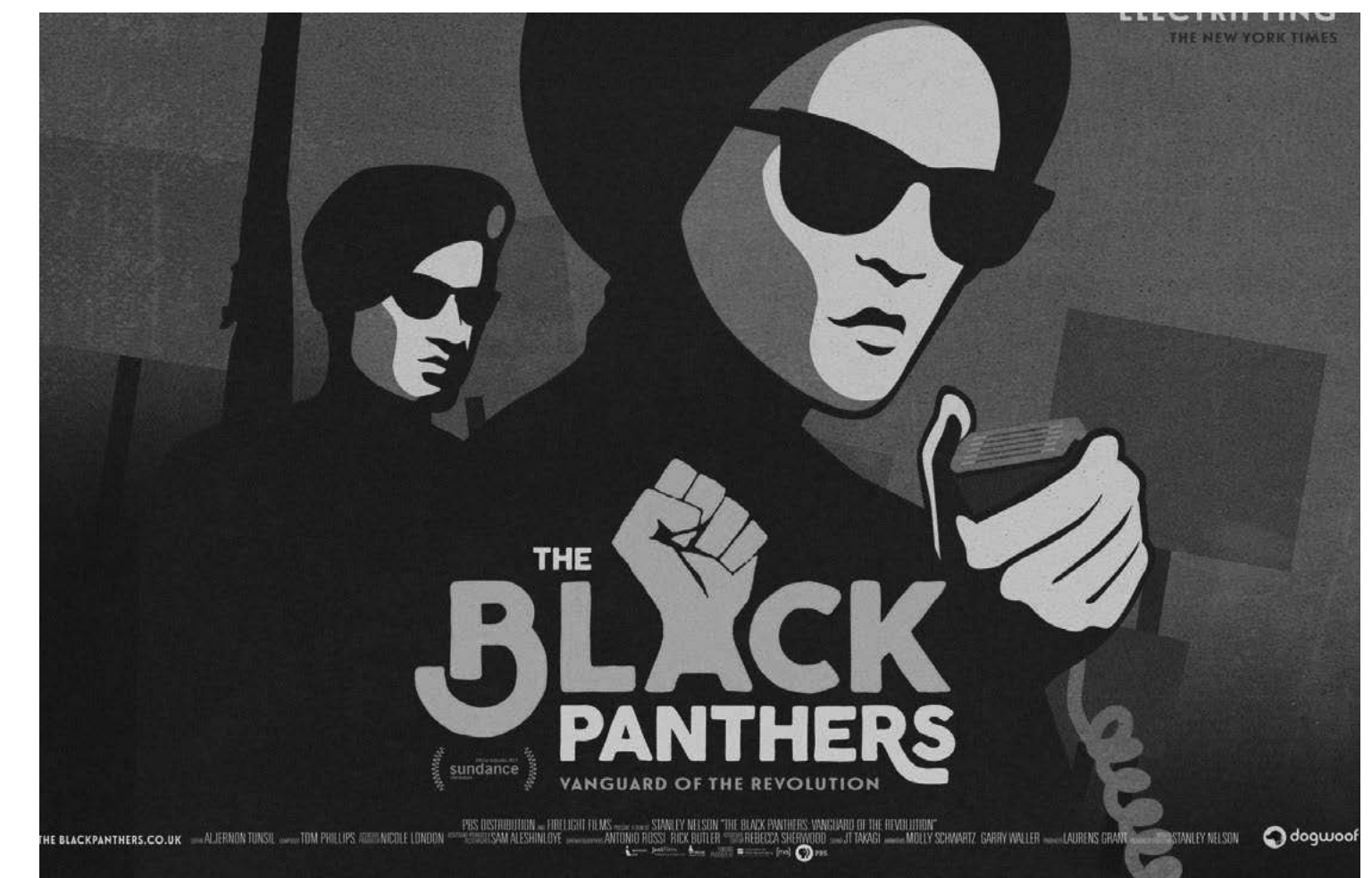
The POV/PBS teams work with filmmakers to maximise the outreach and engagement potential of each documentary broadcast through the creation of lesson plans, discussion guides, partner toolkits, film-specific reading lists and ways to hold a screening event. For example:

- This could mean partnering with US veteran organisations for ***Almost Sunrise***, a film about the emotional aftermath of war, veteran suicide, and seeking redemption through healing to bring it to relevant communities and offer ways in which it can be used as a tool to deepen understanding of the issues the film raises within the veteran community and also help bridge the military-civilian divide .



- Or it could mean strategically targeting specific audiences ahead of broadcast, finding new ways to build a buzz around a film following a successful festival and theatrical run, as was the case with Stanley Nelson's ***Black Panthers: Vanguard of a Revolution***, which aired on Independent Lens on PBS

in February 2016. The film examined the rise and fall of the Black Panther party in the 1960's through historical footage and interviews with key players in the movement, and had already deployed a highly successful outreach and engagement strategy in context with its festival and cinematic release. This majorly boosted the profile of the film ahead of its broadcast premiere, building anticipation and attracting audiences to watching the film on TV. Building on the film's profile and the heightened audience engagement opportunity, the PBS outreach and engagement strategy particularly focused on young people in the midst of their own youth-led movements, successfully encouraging them to hold their own conversations around the issues in the film. It also lead to the film becoming the most tweeted-about program on PBS since Nielsen Social began tracking Twitter activity in 2011.<sup>1</sup>



#### Footnotes:

1 Promotional strategy for Black Panthers pays off for PBS (2016) Current by Henry Schneider

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— Or it could mean creating learning resources that make productive conversations possible. For *Motherland*, a film about one of the busiest maternity hospitals on the planet in one of the world's most populous countries, the Philippines, POV created materials that enabled young people across across the U.S. to engage in discussions about family planning without getting mired in controversial debate, personal religious beliefs or their own embarrassment.



Like all broadcasters, viewing figures are important but at POV, the emphasis is on showing films with outstanding content – and if the audience engagement around a film is strong but the viewing figures are less so, this still constitutes a win for PBS.

The engagement work is funded half by PBS itself and half by foundations, but their funding model has stringent guidelines<sup>2</sup> to ensure impartiality of both the content and its resources, applying three tests (editorial control, perception and commercialism) to every proposed funding arrangement to test its acceptability. As public media, it is crucial that the work is free from political views and biases and that it reflects a wide range of perspectives.

As a public media series, the documentaries that are shown on POV and their accompanying resources are always free, to ensure those who wouldn't pay to access them can. Once the broadcast licence has expired, POV offer the filmmakers the opportunity to keep their film in the online library (without incurring a fee for either party), which makes the film freely available to the community network who can continue to access the films to use in their work. 85% of filmmakers choose to do so (there are currently more than 90 films and digital products available).



## ABC AUSTRALIA

In mid-2017, ABC's series *War on Waste* prompted the Australian broadcaster to start working more deeply with audience outreach & engagement. The series focused on the 8% growth of Australian waste each year (be it from food, plastics, coffee cups or fashion) and captured the imagination of the Australian public.



#### Footnotes:

2 PBS funding guidelines

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As well as deploying established broadcast marketing tactics such as a **dedicated series website**, press, and what became ABC Australia's most successful social media campaign to date, the show's Commissioning Editor, Stephen Oliver credits the multi-platform "pan-ABC" approach and his recruitment of a dedicated Impact Producer, Andy Marks, as a key element in reaching and engaging as broad an audience as possible.

The Impact Producer was not a role initially anticipated, and required the ABC to find additional funds after production had commenced to hire a dedicated person to strategise and then deliver outreach and engagement tactics before, during and after broadcast. This key role commenced just as production did in December 2016, initially embedded in the production company. It then continued part time, within the ABC through TX of the first three episodes in May 2017 and on until after the fourth follow-up episode to the series was broadcast in December 2017. Impact & engagement tactics focussed on three areas: 1) reducing food waste, 2) composting 3) supporting "bring your own" or BYO coffee cups and included:

- **Partnerships** - Over 34 different organisations were meaningfully engaged as part of what the series termed its "Impact Community", ranging from NGO affiliations through to grassroots organisations. Key partners that were able to move with the series and participate in baseline tracking and pre-agreed metrics included:
  - **Responsible Cafes** — that promote how cafes and customers can be more sustainable (there were 450 member cafes before broadcast, which multiplied exponentially to 1,050 after the first

week of broadcast, and to 3,300 by the end of 2017). Member cafes saw an increase of 117% in the use of BYO cups by the end of the series, and calculated that as a result, 38 million disposable cups and lids had been saved across their member cafes since the series was broadcast. A prominent BYO cup manufacturer also directly attributed a 400% increase in sales to *War on Waste*

- **Compost Revolution** — who work with councils to supply heavily discounted composters and worm farms. Sign-ups for composters went up 379% since the series was first broadcast and worm demand increased to such a degree that all worm suppliers in Victoria and New South Wales were out of stock for two months after broadcast.

- **Community involvement** - Through these partnerships, profound engagement occurred at community and grassroots level. The team credit the content assets created by the series with enabling groups of all sizes to better connect with their communities - some unprompted. For example, shortly after broadcast, a day care centre looking after the children of Qantas employees made an installation of used coffee cups, inviting the CEO of the company to visit and receive a request to change company policy! By the time of the follow up show in December 2017, the ABC delivered a pre-broadcast briefing to a selection of the "Impact Community" to update on the series, its impact to date and to build a groundswell of support (and share content) ahead of the update show's transmission.

- **Spin off Podcast** - The **War on Waste podcast series**

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published on a bi-weekly basis from broadcast of the first episode in May 2017 until broadcast of the fourth episode in December 2017. The podcast was presented by the TV show's host, comedian Craig Reucassel, alongside a well known co-host from ABC Radio Sydney. The collaboration between ABC factual and ABC radio was a first for the ABC, which has now established an ABC Audio Studios Unit. The team attribute the long tail of the podcast to keeping audiences engaged between the broadcast of the first three episodes and the update episode at the end of last year; and its ability to reflect and respond to how audiences were responding to the series developed a dynamic two-way relationship between them and the ABC.

Throughout the series, ABC Editorial Policy was consulted to ensure that all participating organisations were appropriate and that there was no undue prominence or bias for any one partner. In terms of viewing figures, the series exceeded its viewership target by 50%, reaching 3.7 million Australians (a 15% reach), the highest ratings for that slot in two years and delivering a wide demographic with 40% of the audience being under 50 - double the ABC average. The success of War on Waste and its multi-dimensional approach to audience engagement precedes the recent ABC announcement in November 2017 of a corporate reorganisation into a 'platform-agnostic corporation for the digital age' to help ensure the broadcaster is optimally set up to ensure it is audience-relevant, achieving both audience targets and charter remit.

# HVMAN

## HUMAN, NETHERLANDS

Dutch public broadcasters are increasingly experimenting with outreach, engagement and impact campaigns – Human, VPRO, KRO-NCRV, EO-IKON and NTR, part of the Dutch public service broadcaster network NPO, have broadcast documentaries with supporting initiatives that enable their films to reach wider audiences more profoundly.

One such documentary is ***Schuldig*** (translated as *Guilty*), a successful six-part documentary series about debt in a neighbourhood in north Amsterdam, broadcast on Human in December 2016. As many as one in five households in the Netherlands have problematic debts and the series' approach - an empathetic observational style following a cast of characters - enabled an in-depth investigation into a problem that was previously not spoken about publicly in the Netherlands.





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The series was made in-house by Human, who supported its launch using established broadcast marketing tactics that leveraged press, media and social media. Separately, a supporting campaign was facilitated by a specially hired Impact Producer who devised a strategy for the series under the mentorship of the [Dutch Impact Makers](#) for nine months ahead of broadcast and continued to work on the project for much of 2017, deploying a range of outreach & engagement tactics that included:

- **Building Partnerships** – There were multiple partners involved in the series' success in addition to Human. The Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment was a major financier of the debate tour as was the Delta Lloyd Foundation. The municipalities of Amsterdam, Zwolle, Arnhem & Helmond also all contributed to the debate tour.
- **Debate tour** – immediately after the broadcast of the last episode, the series was shown in five major Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Arnhem, Zwolle and Helmond), with discussions and public debates held that tackled the issues the documentary raised. Contributors from the series, prominent opinion formers and representatives from the world of debt, politics and public policy all participated in a format that was accessible for anyone touched by debt.
- **Magazine** – this one-off magazine was launched 3 months after broadcast by [Movisie](#), the Dutch Centre for Social Development which exists to promote the participation and independence of citizens. The publication was created to share insights and outcomes from the screening tour, as well as interviews with experts and prominent figures, with as wide an audience

as possible. The magazine is available online but also distributed through multiple channels used in publicity and outreach for the series.

- **Political debate in The Hague** – Held in the run up to the Parliamentary elections, the issues raised by the series and in subsequent activities were discussed in the Dutch parliament.
- **Political campaign** – Launched in partnership with the newspaper De Correspondent in July 2017 ahead of the 2018 municipal elections, the campaign targets political parties to put an end to the issues created by problematic debts.

The series' viewing figures peaked at 1,112,000 for the first episode, before ending at 996,000 for the sixth and final episode (out of a population of just over 17 million people in the Netherlands).

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# NRK

## NRK, NORWAY

Outreach & engagement strategies around documentaries in Norway are becoming more prevalent, inspired by the trail-blazing 70-minute film [Ida's Diary](#), broadcast on the young leaning NRK3 on World Mental Health Day, 10th October 2015 as the headline film in the channel's mental health season.

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Ida is a young Norwegian woman struggling with a very turbulent emotional life caused by an emotionally unstable personality disorder (borderline/BPD), one of the most stigmatised mental health issues<sup>3</sup>. For eight years, Ida kept a video diary in order to ease her mind and structure her thoughts. The film is constructed directly from carefully edited fragments of her diary, providing a unique insight into a world of fear and anxiety, but also precious moments of everyday victories and self-discovery. Most importantly, it depicts her powerful struggle towards self-acceptance and a genuine appreciation of life.

The film team crafted an extensive outreach and engagement strategy catalysed by participating in Good Pitch, where they were introduced to a range of potential partners that could extend the reach and deepen the connection of the film with audiences.

Soon after, four major Nordic broadcasters came on board and agreed to simulcast the film on World Mental Health Day in 2015; NRK (Norway), taking exclusive TV and online rights for the country along with DR (Denmark), SVT (Sweden) and YLE (Finland). In the

meantime, the film benefited from a successful festival run, premiering in competition at IDFA in November 2014.

Ahead of the NRK broadcast, the film team approached the Commissioning Editor, proposing a partnership between the broadcaster and Aftenposten, one of Norway's largest national newspapers. They wanted to heavily profile the documentary for World Mental Health day in their print press, putting Ida on the front page of the newspaper and the magazine - but also, controversially, to screen the film on their web channel. This proposal for radical collaboration—crucially, sharing the exclusivity of broadcast rights—was unprecedented for NRK:

***“This was a something we had not done before, but after a meeting we realised that this could be positive for NRK even if we gave away some of our exclusivity. Aftenposten are reaching a huge audience through the newspaper and different magazines, and online they are still so small that they represent no competition for NRK. In other words they could do something NRK could not do.”***

—

Tore Tomter

Former Commissioning Editor, NRK

NRK supported the film through established broadcast marketing tactics (such as other press and on social media), and in addition, *Aftenposten* collaborated with the film team on a short series about young people struggling with mental health issues under the hashtag #no-filter, and continued profiling the film in print editions in both a leader and an op-ed a couple of weeks later.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>3</sup> Personality disorder patients let down by system (2018) BBC News

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The strategy to extend and deepen the reach of the film at the point of broadcast was complemented by extensive outreach work around the film with mental health professionals in Norway and across Europe. A 20 minute version of the film was broadcast online to the rest of the world on [Vice](#), also on World Mental Health Day in October 2015.

***“Having both NRK and Aftenposten collaborating on making Ida’s story and mental health the headliner of the day secured a better reach, a more effective impact and more awareness and knowledge about the topic for both young people and adults. This was all possible because NRK dared to share their exclusivity.”***

—  
Karianne Berg  
Outreach Director, Indie Film

## FOR PROFIT AND FOR IMPACT

The public service broadcasters aren’t the only game in town. From HBO to Netflix (noting earlier case studies on *Virunga* & *Chasing Coral*), there are more and more examples of cable and streaming services paying attention to the potential of audience engagement and impact campaigns and providing huge commitment along with their reach. It’s often not standard, and it’s often hard- negotiated for. But it is possible and the results startling.

Then there is the surge in “social impact marketing” companies including Participant Media, RYOT, First Look Media, Picture Motion, Together Films and Vulcan Productions among many others who say they are mission-driven and have a “double-bottom line.” This trend points to the fact that marketing and distribution today have merged closer together with impact efforts, meaning that their goals can overlap and compliment one another. Coupled with the overturning of traditional distribution windows, and with more sophisticated approaches to impact strategy, we think the new question is this: How can we optimise both impact and commercial return by getting the film to the right people in the right ways?

This way of thinking recognises that there are overlaps between Impact and Distribution, and seeks to get the best of both worlds - with each activity driving the other. More and more distributors are seeing the value of engagement efforts for distribution. The partnerships which Impact film teams cultivate increase audience size, and many distributors welcome the boost to their brand when working with film campaigns for social good. The more that distributors value engagement, the more they invest in it.

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Experience & experimentation has demonstrated that Impact and Distribution aren't necessarily separate or in opposition. These activities simply need to be planned and strategised together, and happily there are more and more examples from every territory to offer example and inspiration.

So remember: it's not Impact and Distribution, but Impact Distribution.

Which one takes priority over the other should be your choice and should reflect the priorities that you had going into the process. Remember the **Know Thyself** Section? If you haven't sorted out your priorities yet, use the tool and do it now.

**WIDEST POSSIBLE DISTRIBUTION  
MARKETING AND BUZZ**

**ACTIVATION OF MOVEMENTS,  
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Edward Snowden speaking after a screening of *CITIZENFOUR* at Amnesty International in London



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## HOW COMMERCIAL ARE IMPACT FILMS?

This is the question that seems to haunt independent filmmakers the world over. That's because we operate in a broader media ecology where box office numbers matter. But analysis of the US box office (the strongest market for documentaries across the world) indicates that impact docs perform on a par with non-impact independent docs, with some taking over \$1 million every year. This is probably why, every year, distributors take an interest in a few of them. But, in the main, it is very hard to get picked up and most documentaries don't have a full theatrical release, going straight to non-theatrical, TV, and online.

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But here's the thing: the market doesn't know best. That's especially true in so many cases where impact is the priority. And with so many online distribution platforms' practice of not releasing their audience data, who actually knows anyway?

Yes: it's hard for a doc to break out in the market. But it's not impossible. And even if a film is not commercially successful, it doesn't mean it can't be successful in other ways.

#### Impact Award Finalists

**Lifetime Theatrical Gross**  
for Impact Award finalists  
taken from [Box Office Mojo](#)

<i>Bully</i>	\$3,495,043
<i>Blackfish</i>	\$2,073,582
<i>Chasing Ice</i>	\$1,328,467
<i>The Act of Killing</i>	\$484,221
<i>The Interrupters</i>	\$282,448
<i>The Invisible War</i>	\$71,968
<i>Gasland</i>	\$30,846
<i>Give up Tomorrow</i>	\$0

Each of these Impact Award Finalists had an extraordinary impact, was deeply loved by fans and honoured by film industry peers and society leaders. So, while box office revenue or TV audience gives you an idea of reach, it can't tell the full story.

There are many ways for films to reach the right audiences. As this beautiful graphic from Chris Tasic reminds us, not everything beautiful and worthwhile will make money. Our mission is to find ways to make sure the best work can reach the right audience and be a sustainable practice for artist filmmakers. (More on sustainability in [Section 3.3](#))



Artist: Chris Tasic

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING





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Being creative in your partnerships, flexible in your ideas about where the audience is and how to reach them, is the name of the game - no matter what the gatekeepers say.

*Ping Pong* — which followed a group of over-80s table tennis champions and challenged the expectation that the elderly should live sedentary lifestyles - never had a theatrical release, but it did manage to reach an important audience through DVD screenings in over 2,000 care homes across the UK.

In some places it may be more difficult than in others. In India, for example, independent filmmakers are contending with a host of barriers, from censorship to an impenetrable Bollywood-dominated market. And without financial backing, it's almost impossible to get a film seen there.

Take the film *An Insignificant Man*, a controversial political film about corruption in India and one man's efforts to build a revolution to change it. With little chance of getting attention at home, the team used the international film festival circuit to build buzz and credibility as a political film outside of India. They went to over 55 film festivals.

They then leveraged the traction they received to secure a deal with an emerging screening-on-demand platform that PVR Cinemas was experimenting with called Vkaoo. They also built a number of “guerrilla partnerships,” including with Book My Show, the biggest event booking site in the country, and they spent sleepless nights spreading the word about their three sneak-preview showings. The result was remarkable.

*An Insignificant Man* sneak previews sold out within 12 hours. The film ended up running for 8 weeks, becoming the highest grossing vérité documentary of all time in India. But the filmmakers didn't stop there. Realising they had an opportunity to expand their audience, they struck a deal with Vice Films to release their film for free on YouTube *while it was still in theatres*. This unconventional, simultaneous-release strategy was a risk for all the partners involved, but one they agreed they were willing to take to test out what a partnership like this could look like.

For Vice, it was a way to break into the Indian market. For the theatre platform, it was a way to work with a small film with no marketing budget to help them maintain a great buzz and convert it into ticket sales. For the filmmakers, it was a way to leverage the momentum they'd built around the theatrical run (and the theatre's marketing budget) towards the online release. It also meant they could get their film out far and wide and establish themselves as respected filmmakers early in their careers. The film ended up with 1.6M views!

Filmmakers and film teams prove time and time again that where there's a will, there's a way.

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IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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## TYPES OF DISTRIBUTION DEALS

These days, distribution deals vary about as much as snowflakes: no two seem to be the same. But there are still some general categories that help frame the big decisions ahead. In this section, we look at the pros and cons of all-rights distribution deals, hybrid distribution and self distribution — all from an impact perspective.

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We've updated this guide to offer regional-specific advice and guidance, incorporating lessons and case studies from other regions including Australasia, parts of Latin America and Asia. Even so, we acknowledge that it nonetheless weighs towards models of distribution that apply to North America and Western Europe. If you're operating outside of these contexts, we hope that the mixture of examples offers you interesting ideas about what you might create or adapt.

#### THE TRADITIONAL ALL-RIGHTS DISTRIBUTION DEAL

In the 'old world' of distribution, filmmakers went to festivals and hoped to get an all-rights distribution deal, which had the benefit of being able to hand over the film to a specialist team who did all the legwork for them - putting the film in cinemas, on TV and online.

For some teams such as *Bully*, who made an all-rights deal with The Weinstein Company in 2012 (after winning the audience award at the **Tribeca Film Festival**), or *Blackfish*, who secured a distribution deal with Magnolia Pictures at Sundance Film Festival in 2013, these

major distribution deals work perfectly well and take the pressure off having to deal with the complexities of the distribution minefield.

In these deals, you get a lump sum of money up-front (it's unusual to see any further money, so this 'minimum guarantee' is usually the fee in exchange for seven or more years of the rights). If the release works well, you reach a bigger audience, the distributor invests the marketing spend and expertise that makes your film a recognised title, and they can help with winning major awards (which typically distributors enter).

But in some cases, these deals can go sour. If the film doesn't perform well initially, distributors can lose interest and move on to their next title rather than squeeze the rest of the juice from the lemon.

Even if it does perform well, much of the control is now with the distributor, meaning the film team may be very restricted in, or even prevented from, executing their impact work. So it's important to ask precise questions about how the rights will be exploited going forward and be very clear on which territories are implicated.

And remember: even if you do get that all-rights deal, it can still be a hell of a lot of heavy lifting for the filmmakers. *Dirty Wars* signed to **IFC**, but because the film team was passionate about their film they still did hundreds of hours of work contacting people and partners, organising panels, etc.

**“If a company has never distributed a documentary before, think twice about being the first.”**

Thom Powers, from *Distribution Advice for 2014*



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**“I wanted to make a film, but I couldn’t reconcile the film I wanted to make with the industry. No one was putting out the kinds of films that I wanted to make. As a person who has an entrepreneurial spirit, I couldn’t figure out how to make that movie and not know where it would end up... I had to figure out the endgame for the film for myself.”**

Ava DuVernay

### THEN VIDEO STREAMING ARRIVED...

Just a few years ago, the emergence of video streaming (SVoD) platforms like Netflix, Amazon and Hulu dramatically shifted the distribution landscape. While there are plenty of cases where a film is shown on both SVoD platforms and public broadcast and other traditional distribution channels (more on that under “Hybrid distribution” below), these platforms are responsible for a new kind of “all-rights” trend.

Some are acquiring the rights to a work when completed, others are getting involved in production early on as an executive producer who buys the Intellectual Property (IP) rights. Netflix Originals and Amazon Prime are examples of this. It allows the distributor to produce the film as ‘original content’, release it exclusively and use it to draw subscribers to their platforms.

For some filmmakers who enter them, these deals can be a welcome relief as they are able to make their money back and get paid up front. But the flipside can mean loss of control around the production process. In most cases it also means losing access to audience data. And it can also mean foregrounding marketing priorities over impact priorities. Also: if impact is your priority, be sure your target audience has access (i.e. broadband internet) to the platform you strike a deal with. (More on this in the [\*\*\*Where’s Your Audience Section 4.4.\*\*\*](#))

While the major players may be different today, negotiating the difference between a distributor’s marketing priorities and a filmmaker’s impact priorities is nothing new. Know that you’ll be issued with a standard contract to start with and that you must be prepared to

have detailed conversations and negotiations upfront about your impact needs and expectations. And adjust the deal terms accordingly. They may be much more receptive than you think.

*Chasing Coral* made a deal with Netflix in 2017. They went into conversations knowing that their impact engagement work was the priority. As a result, **Netflix’s Educational Screening** licences allowed for thousands of Netflix subscribers to hold educational community screenings of the film through the platform for localised climate education and action globally, so long as they were free and open to the public. And they worked on a case-by-case basis to ensure that those without access to Netflix could get to the story in this way. A year into their campaign, the team was able to support 1500+ screenings in over 100 countries!

*Virunga* also secured global distribution with Netflix. (At the time of *Virunga*’s launch in late 2014, Netflix was in 55 countries with 60 million subscribers. Over the next 12 months this rose to all 190 countries in the world and they now have 117 million subscribers.) The team described Netflix as an extremely understanding partner that was supportive of their campaign aims: to reach as wide an audience as possible but also to reach key target audiences. So, when they asked, they were given permission to screen at 100 film festivals worldwide and at another 100 international non-theatrical screenings. They were able to hold influencer screenings in crucial spaces, including the EU, UK, Belgium and Dutch parliaments, on Capitol Hill in the U.S. and in development ministries. They were also able to screen in the business and investment community, for shareholders, politicians, policy makers and high profile influencers, as well as for I/NGO’s and the conservation community.



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Not only was Netflix willing and flexible to support these important screenings as the campaign expanded, but because Netflix was not yet available in Africa at the time of launch they allowed the team to partner with Afridocs in order to reach this crucial territory for the campaign. Six months after launch, *Virunga* had its official African broadcast premiere on Afridocs, screening to all 49 sub-Saharan countries in Africa on satellite TV and terrestrially to an additional 100 cities in eight countries.

This was not a normal deal, but it became possible because the interests of the filmmakers and the platform were aligned. The bottom line here is: ask for what you need - you might be pleasantly surprised.

Now the reality check: many documentary films will not be picked up by distributors, not even the smaller ones.

If that's true for you, feel reassured that you are in great company! Some of our favourite films, ones which had huge critical success and created significant social impact, are in this boat too.

The great news is that, whether you didn't get a distribution deal or whether you did and it wasn't worth signing, these days there are so many other options.

### HYBRID DISTRIBUTION

Today it's increasingly possible - and even common - to 'carve up' the distribution, giving the film team an opportunity to retain certain rights and allowing you to be responsive to the campaign and demand from audiences. It's increasingly possible to negotiate separate deals for retail, home video, television, educational, theatrical, non-

theatrical and video on demand, as well as splitting all the digital rights for the film.

You can give away some parts, and retain others, all as it suits you. This 'hybrid' approach has the benefit of allowing film teams the chance to tailor their distribution plan to their exact strategic aims.

*The Invisible War* did a deal that gave theatrical, DVD and online rights jointly to **Cinedigm** and **New Video**. **PBS** took TV rights. **Ro\*Co Films** did educational distribution and international sales and **Film Sprout (now part of Picture Motion)** did non-theatrical distribution as part of the film team's Invisible No More movement.

*In The House I Live In*, a film about the war on drugs in north America, there were two primary objectives for the distribution strategy; the first was to reach the widest possible audience and the second was the ability to be nimble, ensuring the film could be deployed to support local reform in venues that may not traditionally carry it. As a result, the team chose a hybrid model of distribution, self-releasing the film theatrically and partnering with Film Buff to make it widely available on VoD and SVoD platforms.

Similarly, *Granito*, Pamela Yates' powerful film about bringing a South American dictator to justice, employed an alternative distribution model whereby campaign goals were given more weight than commercial ones. The objective was to ensure a widespread distribution of the documentary to audiences who need it most using VoD and DVD purchasing. But, in order to really ensure the film permeated Guatemalan society, the team gave master DVDs to the country's lead bootlegger so he could make



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quality pirate versions for his customers under the name of *'The Greatest Story Never Told'*, which were distributed to all of the street markets in the country, retailing at \$1.25 a time!

In South Africa, the *Miners Shot Down* team aimed to get the truth out about the Marikana massacre and to change the public narrative to show that the Lonmin Mining company and the state were to blame for it. So, they needed to get the film in front of a broad public at a pivotal time, during the commission of an inquiry into the massacre so the politicians couldn't bury it. This meant a hybrid approach.

Before the film was released, they decided to hand some crucial forensic eyewitness footage to the media and to the commission concurrently. Once the film was out, they needed to get the story out far and wide. So they struck a deal with theatrical distributor Ster Kinekor in 2014 for a one-week run. But, with a robust multi-platform social media plan and word of mouth, the film continued for two more weeks after that. They then ran their own community screenings tour in key cities and towns across the country to keep up the pressure-campaign. They handed out DVDs to shareholders at the Lonmin Mining Company's annual general meeting, and eventually, with tremendous public support, they were able to secure an SABC public broadcast deal in August 2018.

In the end, through this hybrid distribution model, the publicity the commission was getting, and the efforts of the Marikana Support Campaign, *Miners Shot Down* succeeded in changing the public narrative on what happened. They also raised over one million rands to support the cascade of mining strikes that rose up in the

wake of the massacre. This money helped to feed strikers' families during the five-month strike. Their film also helped get the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) to come out against what happened. Today, the film team and their partners continue to organise for justice for the miners and their families.

Negotiating and managing all the different distribution options takes time, and can be a slog, particularly if you're new to it all. But it's worth fighting for. And, as we've seen in earlier parts of the Guide, your options will often depend on the energy and capacity of your film team and partners.

#### SELF DISTRIBUTION

Some teams take a hybrid approach and then take it to the max. They don't just negotiate the theatrical rights separately, they ring the cinemas themselves, or in the case of *Weapon of War*, they create a mobile cinema to screen their film where cinemas don't exist.

***The Age of Stupid*** team organised a solar-powered "cinema tent" premiere in London's Leicester Square and linked it by satellite to 62 cinemas around the UK in 2009. They took £100,000 at the box office over 13 weeks and then took another £100,000 in non-theatrical bookings and cycle-powered green screenings.

It can be a lot of work, but many filmmakers believe that they made more money cutting out the middleman, and of course they retained total control of how the film was handled. Sometimes, this is essential.

The *9.70* documentary team in Colombia had an uphill





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battle from the start. With a film that critiqued the government and a media-blackout on their story, they had no choice but to self-distribute. While they were able to strike a broadcast deal with the Venezuelan company Telesur, it was not the best way to reach audiences in Colombia. But then, something unexpected happened.

Almost overnight, a leaked copy of their film was uploaded to YouTube and viewed 7,000 times! Recognising the huge momentum and clear need that the farmers had for the story to help grow their movement, they decided to make the film available for free on YouTube. Within 24 hours another 10,000 people had viewed it and by the end of the week, that was up to 200,000 views. The entire campaign was run horizontally, with the filmmakers responding to requests to appear at screenings that were being run entirely by farmers, activists, and other community leaders.

Their self-distribution strategy was so successful that 9.70 became a common talking point in the media. It led the government to issue a cease-and-desist warning to the filmmakers and launch a campaign to discredit their work. But the momentum the filmmakers had built eventually forced the mainstream media to bring them onto their shows to respond. And, twenty days after the film's release on YouTube, the government was forced to repeal Resolution 9.70.

This trend of content creators becoming their own distributors is not likely to go away anytime soon. On one end, we've discussed large co-production deals with major distributors. On the other, we're seeing all kinds of creative ways that filmmakers are building direct relationships with their audiences using whatever tools they have at their disposal.

Crowdfunding platforms, for example, have risen up not only as ways of raising funds for a film but also of building an audience base and a direct relationship with them. The *An Insignificant Man* team did just that. Lacking a sales agent and contending with an impenetrable film market that was not used to accommodating a political film, they decided to go direct to their audience, using an India-based crowdfunding platform. They were able to raise over \$120k. It was the platform's most successful crowdfunding campaign ever for a film, and an added benefit was that these direct relationships were then the filmmaker's to keep for the next film or request.

There are resources out there to help support all kinds of creative distribution strategies. For example, **Sundance Institute's Creative Distribution Fellowship** provides cash grants and resources to filmmakers interested in releasing their films without a distributor. Their goal is to use the lessons learned to benefit other productions, which makes it a win-win!

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IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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Filmaid screening in Thailand.



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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**Have a look at the current list of qualifying festivals. But this changes at annually so be sure to check for this years list on your own**

*filmfreeway.com/festivals/curated/academy-award-qualifying-festivals*

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**Distribution Transparency**

*filmmakermagazine.com/94034-distribution-transparency-four-filmmakers-reveal-their-distribution-numbers-part-one/#.XNFeH9NKg8Y*

Here is a rare read. Some facts and figures on distribution set out in an excellent article: Distribution Transparency: Four Filmmakers Reveal Their Distribution Numbers in Filmmaker Magazine: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

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**Netflix is Bad for the Film Business**

*medium.com/@emilybest/netflix-is-bad-for-the-film-business-f866a0ee7eb6*

There are plenty of critiques out there about the impact of streaming platforms on the industry. Here's one.

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**Obama explains why he signed a deal with Netflix and how he thinks it will help solve our political divide.**

*businessinsider.com/barack-obama-speaks-about-netflix-deal-how-it-could-help-solve-political-divide-okta-2018-5?r=US&IR=T*

Bringing figures as talented, charismatic, and persuasive as the Obamas into Production & Distribution could mean that a potentially unstoppable force for generating social change is created. But will it actually work?

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**2016 Obama's America — how did the alt right independent documentary about Barack Obama become a top grossing smash**

*www.documentarytelevision.com/commissioning-process/2016-obamas-america-earns-35-million-theatrical-distribution-case-study-takeaways/*

A case study about the distribution of the wildly successful, rightwing film: *2016 Obama's America*. That independent documentary about Barack Obama became the top grossing doc of 2012, one of the hiest of all time, ranking with hits from the other side like *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Inconvenient Truth*.

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**A manual for urban projection**

*theilluminator.org/tools*

We couldn't resist but share this site which makes and re-make software to stage good looking actions and projections. A whole lot of fun.



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## WHERE'S YOUR AUDIENCE?

**A** core rule of impact distribution is this: a great distribution deal doesn't mean much if it doesn't account for where your target audience is. So, in this section, we are going to think about the impact distribution conundrum from the perspective of audiences. Who are they, where are they and how do they consume media?

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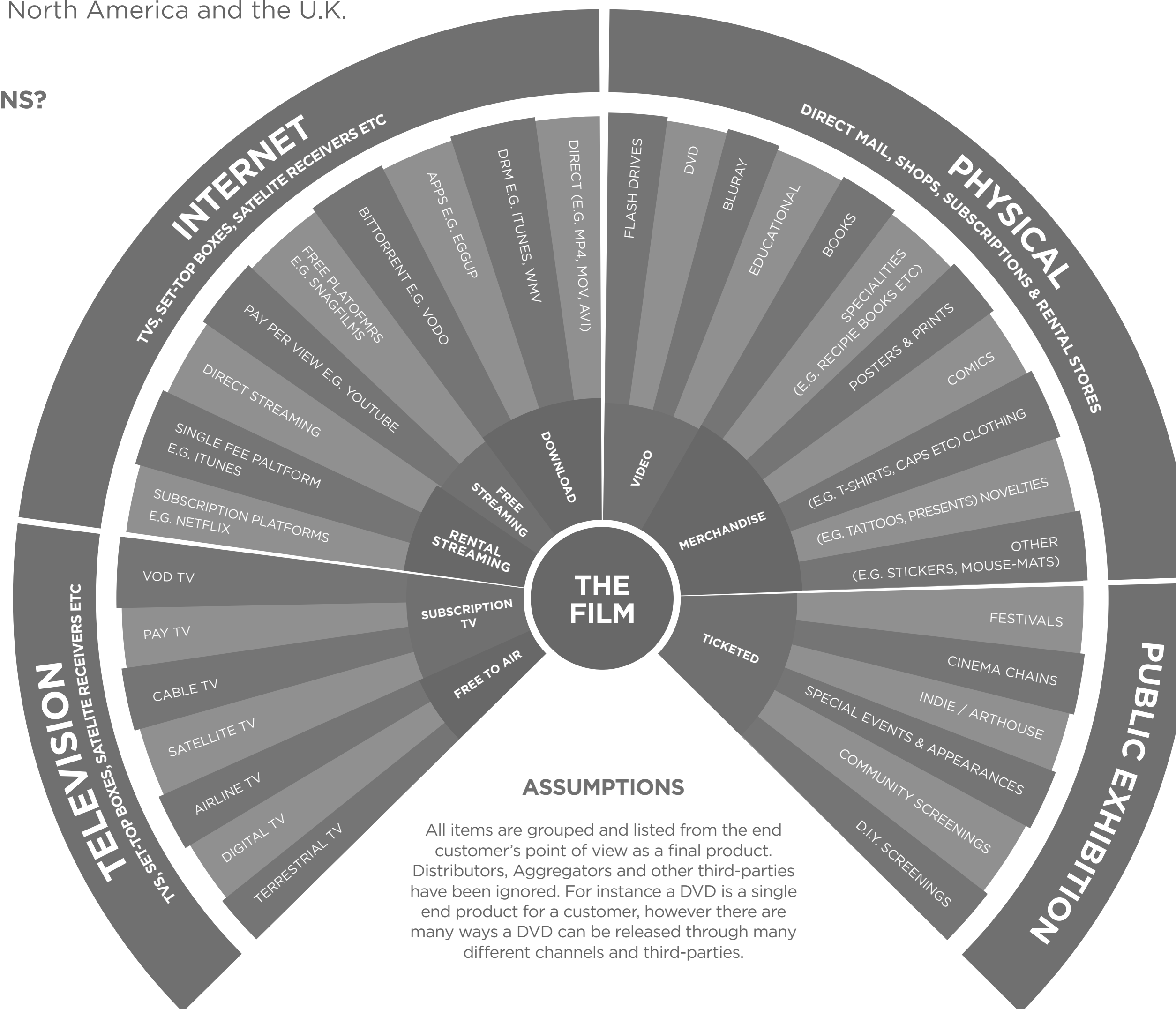
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The graphic below offers a snapshot of a few popular distribution options in North America and the U.K.

### DISTRIBUTION WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?



**“Domestic Sales agency deals should be limited to 6 months. In this day, if you can’t sell a film within that time, filmmakers should have full ability to do what they like without involving (or having a revenue stream towards) their sales agent.”**  
Chris Horton,  
Sundance Artist Services



#### ASSUMPTIONS

All items are grouped and listed from the end customer’s point of view as a final product. Distributors, Aggregators and other third-parties have been ignored. For instance a DVD is a single end product for a customer, however there are many ways a DVD can be released through many different channels and third-parties.



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### CINEMAS/MOVIE THEATRES

A major incentive for filmmakers to get their films into theatres has long been the mainstream attention it can garner. Traditionally, this has been the only way that your film will be eligible for certain prestigious prizes, and therefore remain in the spotlight for longer. But, in the U.S., new Academy rules mean that's no longer the case.

For the first time, the Academy's Board of Governors streamlined its rules for the 91st **Academy Awards** to say that films in the Documentary Feature category which have won a qualifying award at a competitive film festival will automatically be eligible for Academy Awards consideration. In other words, filmmakers don't have to jump through qualifying hoops, such as a theatrical release, to have a shot at the award.

Nevertheless, films that go theatrical are more likely get newspaper reviews and are more likely to translate out of the arts pages into features around the issue. So, if raising press awareness is an important part of your strategy - as it was for *American Promise*, who used an ambitious theatrical release in over 60 cities in the US to build awareness, dialogue and action around issues of black male achievement - then theatrical release could be a strategic choice.

Do consider the theatrical audience make-up when making your decision. The **Motion Picture Association of America** notes that in 2016 in the U.S., people making up the "Asians/Other Ethnicities" category reported the highest annual cinema attendance per capita, going an average of 6.1 times per year, whereas the number of white moviegoers in North America declined.

These days, it is possible for a film team to self-release into arthouse/independent cinemas, or even negotiate with a large chain. But you'll need to raise significant funds to support theatrical bookings, marketing and publicity. Many filmmakers have successfully used crowdfunding, or the newer theatrical-on-demand platforms, to do this. The latter amounts to individual crowd-sourced theatre screenings, through companies like **Tugg** and **Vkoo**. Just be aware that it's often up to the filmmaker to do the outreach to fill the theatres, so have a plan to ensure that the money you spend to use these platforms pays off.

Be strategic about the theatres you choose, to ensure they are ones that your target audience can or will go to. And remember: ticket prices can be a huge barrier to entry for some audiences. That's definitely true in the U.S., where movie-goers can pay up to \$15 in some states (though the average price is \$8.65). If you're hoping to engage low-income audiences, you'll need to take this fact into account.

### NON-THEATRICAL COMMUNITY VENUES

From town halls to pop-up mobile cinema units on the back of a truck, non-theatrical screening venues have proven to be one of the most important tools for film teams wanting to create impact. That's because they can offer flexibility across a campaign, access to hard to reach audiences, and even sources of revenue.

While the ease of access to video content on a personal device has made it more difficult to attract audiences to an in-person screening when they know they can simply stream the film on their laptops, in-person events are very important, and sometimes vital, to social change. Caitlin Boyle of Film Sprout puts it this way:



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***“I think there is an inescapable human need to convene in person with one another. Films, like books or other forms of art, help us emotionally connect to an idea or issue. But there is something about the immediacy of film that allows us to do so together, collectively. And at a time when consumption patterns are increasingly solitary, and when algorithmic tools cater to our preferences in ways that isolate us into our respective opinion and taste silos, opportunities to gather together for shared, unifying experiences become vital. I notice that audiences tend to crave even more of it and ask for direction on how they can help and continue to be a part of the conversation. The emotional engagement in a bricks and mortar setting with other people just can’t compare with other modes of watching the same film.”***

So don’t give up on the live, in-person events. You may need to work harder to get people to attend these days, but that’s true across sectors, including retail, public services and more.

While traditionally, many distributors have been prepared to negotiate or even waive these non-theatrical rights — deemed a low priority or too time-consuming to administer — that’s changing. Distributors are beginning to show interest in community screening rights too (sometimes called “educational rights”), but it may or may not be in your best interest to give these away because they can offer valuable opportunities to reach relevant audiences in wonderfully innovative and creative ways.

Look at *The Age of Stupid* - where the team retained non-theatrical rights and sold screening licenses direct from their website, allowing anyone anywhere to hold a screening of the film. Crucially, the organiser of the non-theatrical screening was encouraged to keep a slice of the profits for themselves or their campaign, which empowered and engaged organisers and audiences before they had even seen the film.

There are now specialised organisations which have the networks and relationships to deliver highly effective community screenings programmes. An example is Film Sprout in the U.S., recently acquired by Picture Motion, who have successfully toured films including *The Invisible War* and *The End of The Line*. Internationally, there are organisations such as PictureHouse Event screenings, Together Films, and Demand.film.





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### VOD (VIDEO ON DEMAND) PLATFORMS

On-demand services are provided by online platforms to allow consumers to view content instantly through cable or internet connected devices such as: laptops/PCs, televisions, tablets and smartphones, and even in-flight entertainment.

As of March 2018, a CNBC All-American Economic Survey showed 57% of the US public has some form of streaming service. That 51% percent of American streamers subscribe to Netflix, the survey showed. That 36% report having both a streaming service and cable or satellite. That is nothing to snooze at!

The number does vary by market though, and generally favours urban areas. The platforms you select will make a difference. For example, in 2017, Netflix held approximately 75% of the total number of over-the-top (OTT), i.e. internet-based, SVOD subscribers in the U.S. By 2018 in the EU it held 47% (Amazon held about 20%). But in other markets, Netflix faces strong competition from national players and has a lower-than-average market share. This is the case in particular in Spain, Poland, Slovenia and Romania. More on that in the Regional Players section below.

Wherever you are, a benefit of VOD is that you can target your audiences online for flexible viewing in their own time. For some audiences, that might be important. Consider the documentary *CARE*. One of the target audiences for the campaign was home care workers - people who generally work multiple jobs at all hours and who were therefore very difficult to convene in person. So, the film team knew the online streaming option was going to be important to ensure that this audience would

be able to see the film in their own time.

A potential downside is if your target audience is not online. So, check the numbers. For example, according to Nielsen's **2018 Q1 Total Audience Report**, only about 50% of black households in the U.S. have access to SVoD platforms, compared to roughly more than three-quarters of Asian- American households. **Another study** has found that "Hispanics" spend more time watching digital video than traditional TV. And the age group that spends the most time on these platforms is 18-24 year-olds, whereas 55-64 year-olds spend the least.

Another downside is that your audiences may not get the benefit of real-time, in person engagement through a VOD platform. This was important to the *CARE* film team, because home care workers are generally isolated from one another (due to the nature of working in homes). Therefore, providing them with an opportunity to connect and share reflections on the film felt important. So the campaign partner the National Domestic Workers Alliance set up a conference call time the day after the online release, in order to give home care workers in their network an opportunity to connect about the film from wherever they were.

Note that the streaming option for *CARE* was offered to audiences for free over a one-month period due to the film's public television broadcast deal. Filmmakers who don't have a public broadcast may turn to other fee-based streaming options. Or it might be that you'll do both!

But be aware: in the U.S., for many impact docs in particular, television rights often have certain 'holdbacks'



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on what types of internet VOD a filmmaker can exploit outside of the television deal until they're out of the contracted term with a TV broadcaster. So consider this if you're hoping to secure both. In addition, remember that if you sell your film to an all-rights distributor or digitally-driven distributor, chances are they'll take all forms of internet VOD. If these rights are important to you, you may want to negotiate to keep them.

Here are the basics in fee-based streaming models:

##### TRANSACTIONAL VOD (TVOD)

In this model, audiences pay for each individual piece of video content they want to see. It can include:

- a) Electronic sell through (EST)/Download to own (DTO)
- b) Download to rent (DTR)

Examples of this kind of platform include: iTunes, Film4oD, Vimeo on Demand.

##### SUBSCRIPTION VOD (SVOD)

In this model, audiences are charged monthly fees in return for accessing the platform's full library. Examples include: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu Plus and HBO in the U.S., and Now TV, MUBI, Dplay, and Teleclub in Europe. C More First is a Scandinavian contender. RTL is popular in Croatia. Viaplay is a Nordic service. And Voyo operates in Eastern Europe.

##### ADVERTISEMENT SUPPORTED VOD (AVOD)

Viewers watch content for free on AVOD platforms - however, they must watch advertisements at various points throughout the film. A portion of the ad revenue is then returned to the content provider. Examples include: Youtube, Hulu (US) and Snagfilm.

In addition, individual television stations might stream their programming through their own website soon after broadcast.

If your target audience is low-income, the AVOD option may be the one that makes it possible for them to see your film.

#### **DVD / BLU-RAY**

These days we see a decreasing interest from distributors in taking sole DVD rights. Most often, they'll only take DVD rights bundled with other rights like VOD. But it's important to remember that DVD might still be the most appropriate platform for reaching certain audiences - such as older audiences, or films that lend themselves to being collected or archived. In addition, the educational market (schools, colleges, universities and other institutions) is still dominated by DVD, although that is changing, too. And finally, let's not forget that community screenings are generally still powered by the humble DVD or Blu-ray.

#### **TELEVISION**

With so many innovative routes to audiences, it can be tempting to gloss over the role of good old TV in your Impact Distribution campaign. That would be a massive mistake.

Public media **in the U.S. reaches 99% of people** and while it's growing, that is still not the case for digital platforms. Television in general is still the dominant way audiences access media, even as the number of people who stream content through on-demand platforms ("streamers") increases. For example, according to **Nielson's 2017 Q4 report**, on a typical day in November 2017 in the



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U.S., 93% of streamers watched traditional TV. Of those, 47% watched TV only, 46% were reached by a mix of traditional TV and streaming, and only 7% streamed exclusively.

***“Even the heaviest of streamers can’t seem to shake broadcast viewing. A true story in Nielsen data, reaffirming the powerful reach and relevance of local media in our daily lives.”***

— **Nielsen’s Local Watch Report: Q4 2017**

In addition, a TV broadcast will often create a new tide mark in public engagement with an issue, and can even offer a rallying moment for partners and audiences or boost digital viewing. Take Stanley Nelson’s *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*. In its television premiere, the documentary received the highest rating ever for an Independent Lens film and became the most-streamed Independent Lens film online. The broadcast hoisted the film up to become one of Twitter’s trending topics for five hours on premiere night.

*Bully* offers another example. When it was first released in 2011 it had already been seen by over 3.5 million kids. But its U.S. broadcast in October 2014 on Independent Lens during National Bullying Prevention Month allowed the film team to reach an additional 1.2M viewers in a single shot.

Or *Blackfish*, which after a successful theatrical run was broadcast on CNN Films to over 24 million viewers in the USA, the tipping point for the phenomenal public response to the film, and the moment when SeaWorld realised it was not going to go away.

A broadcast can be of real value to campaign partners, some months or even years after the initial release at festivals or theatres.

A great example of this is *American Promise*, which reached around 1.5M viewers with their broadcast on POV. They collaborated with local PBS offices to boost their community engagement efforts - PBS SoCal, its South California office, worked on the American Graduate campaign, organising events to help reduce school dropout rates and keep kids in education till graduation. Organising activities around American Graduate Day, they ran workshops for teachers, parents, children and students of all ages, distributing interactive learning games, apps and other educational materials to keep kids engaged. You can read more about their community activities [here](#).

But let’s also not forget, broadcasters can make outstanding partners too — and they can really engage with your ongoing campaign strategy.

#### GEEK OUT

IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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***Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2*** aired on POV in July 2018. But the 16th World Day Against the Death Penalty was coming up that October, so POV made sure to open up access to the film for community screenings. This ended up adding important value to the campaign long-term.





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Artist Trevor Paglen's "Code Words of the Surveillance State" is projected onto British parliament to support the release of *CITIZENFOUR*

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# Geek out

## Further reading

### 4.4

#### ADVERTISEMENT SUPPORTED VOD (AVOD)



##### Direct Distribution & Marketing Roundup

[nofilmschool.com/2013/09/direct-distribution-roundup-whos-todays-digital-tools](http://nofilmschool.com/2013/09/direct-distribution-roundup-whos-todays-digital-tools)

No Film School lays out a who's who of today's digital tools. See more at: [docsociety.org/resources](http://docsociety.org/resources)

#### DVD / BLU RAY



##### Hustwit

[hustwit.com](http://hustwit.com)  
Use Gary Hustwit's documentary-linked design-porn merchandise

as inspiration.

#### TELEVISION



##### #BlackSocialTV: How Black Viewers Are Dominating on Two Screens

[medium.com/theli-st-medium/black-social-tv-how-black-viewers-are-dominating-on-two-screens-7ef0aff5b66](https://medium.com/theli-st-medium/black-social-tv-how-black-viewers-are-dominating-on-two-screens-7ef0aff5b66)

Sherri Williams and Lynessa Williams write for Medium about how technology is reviving TV through a key demographic.

##### Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution

[current.org/2016/03/promotional-strategy-for-black-panthers-pays-off-for-pbs](http://current.org/2016/03/promotional-strategy-for-black-panthers-pays-off-for-pbs)  
Learn more about how Stanley Nelson's *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* did it.

##### New Research Tracks the Political Divide Through TV Preferences

[mediainimpactproject.org](http://mediainimpactproject.org)  
futurePerfect lab and the Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project released *Are You What You Watch?* with support from the Pop Culture Collaborative. Some 3,000 Americans were polled on their favorite news and entertainment programs and their opinions about hot-button political issues. Using statistical clustering technique, we identified three distinct ideological groups with very different media and entertainment habits.



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## GLOBAL REACH

It may sound obvious, but if you are looking to get your film into a specific territory, don't just take the word of a global sales agent or distributor about what works; make sure you connect with the brilliant regional film organisations and local filmmakers to find out what is possible.



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Malinda Wink



Luis  
González  
Zaffaroni  
*DocSP*

## AUSTRALIA

The main venues for exhibiting documentary films are festivals held in each major city, such as the [Sydney Film Festival](#), [Melbourne International Film Festival](#), [Brisbane International Film Festival](#), [Adelaide Film Festival](#), [Byron Bay International Film Festival](#), [Antenna](#), and smaller but popular regional festivals (eg. [Breath of Fresh Air](#), [Cinefest](#), [Something Somewhere](#)). There are also several thematically-aligned festivals with a strong following ([HRAFF](#), [Environment Film Festival](#), [Transitions](#), [Queer Screen](#)). Check the [Film Festival Australia](#) site for the full list.

Australia also has a strong network of inner-city independent cinemas that provide a venue for docs (eg. [Cinema Nova](#), [Dendy Cinemas](#), and [Palace Cinemas](#)) and some slots during summer at the OpenAir and Moonlight outdoor cinema programs. For the full list of independent cinemas in Australia and NZ visit: [independentcinemas.com.au/member-cinemas](http://independentcinemas.com.au/member-cinemas). Feature documentaries do have a home here, albeit limited, with national broadcasters and their streaming platforms, [SBS](#), [ABC](#) and [NITV](#). SVOD channels include [Stan](#), Netflix, [Foxtel](#) and [DocPlay](#).

Malinda Wink, formerly of the [Shark Island Institute](#) (now Global Director of Good Pitch), tells us that many of the Good Pitch projects have also teamed with cinema on-demand platforms including [Demand](#) and [Fanforce](#), especially for regional and impact screenings. Good Pitch teams have also co-hosted screenings with community (eg. surf clubs, libraries, local councils), school, corporate and government organisations, sometimes charging a

license fee or sharing four-walling costs. The team at [Media Stockade](#) are connecting documentary filmmakers with corporate screening opportunities. Kanopy offers a streaming service to universities.

## BRAZIL

Luis González Zaffaroni of [DocSP](#) in Brazil tells us that cable TV channels like [Curta!](#), [Canal Brasil](#), [Globo News](#), [CineBrasilTV](#), [BOX Brazil](#) and [Arte 1](#), amongst others, tend to be strong partners for local documentary productions because of a mix of financing tools and the fact that they provide one of the best ways to reach a large local audience. OTT/digital services are still a niche option, but many filmmakers are starting to give these platforms a try. Most commonly, they simply use the broadcaster's streaming service. But a good local content aggregator can also help filmmakers access the big international players of the market.

For in-person screenings, film festivals like [It's All True International Documentary Film Festival](#), [São Paulo International Film Festival](#), [Rio International Film Festival](#) or [Festival de Brasília](#) are also major players. "In Brazil," says Luis, "there are more festivals than days in a year." And how well a film does at festivals often determines how widely it will circulate around the country. However, there are a few alternative circuits for documentaries, and these tend to be connected with cultural centres. They are usually used as a theatrical "second round", and tend to get better numbers than the commercial "first round."

Impact production and distribution is still very new in Brazil. But new people and players like [VideoCamp](#)

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Sophy Sivaraman  
*Indian Documentary Foundation*



Flor Rubina  
*CCDoc*

and **Taturana** in distribution, and **DOCSP-DocImpacto** as training and networking platforms, are helping to lead the charge.

### CHILE

According to Flor Rubina of the CCDoc team in Chile, one of the best ways to promote documentaries there is through festivals. Two of the most important are **Sanfic** in August and FIC **Valdivia** in October. Chile has a pretty stable governmental funding system for documentaries, with two main institutions that give financial support to projects in every state of development, and have specific lines for co-productions. Local broadcasters don't usually co-produce documentaries with independent companies, and don't usually buy non-fiction content produced by independent filmmakers, so these funds represent the most important source of funding for independent filmmakers.

There are venues in several cities across Chile where feature-length films can be screened, including an existing network of art-house cinemas that plan their year together (**Red de Salas de Cine**). Many of them program documentaries, but one of the best ways to get into the local market is through a local partner. In that sense, **Chileconecta** is an industry event for documentaries and non-fiction projects that offers excellent opportunities to find local and Latin-American partners. It has docs in progress, one-to-one meetings, panels and workshops. For international producers with projects in Chile, there are several regional **film commissions** that have specific information for certain zones (Atacama Desert and Patagonia, for example), and practical information regarding rental can be found at **shootinchile.net**.

### CHINA

China and India are also emerging markets for documentary. All theatrically released films in China must go through a government censorship vetting process, and before a film can have a festival premiere, it's required to have received its theatrical release permit. So, the barriers can be high for many filmmakers and their content. Even so, theatres are starting to show more documentaries, mostly limited to Chinese content. New models, such as crowdfunding theatrical distribution platforms, are emerging to help open up new pathways for alternative content.

In the meantime, AVOD is still seen as the main distribution pathway for independent documentaries in China because broadcasters, by contrast, tend to be more cautious about taking on social issue-driven documentaries. The Sony-owned **AXN**, which serves 17 territories across Asia, is a major player here. Other major digital players include: **Tencent**, **Youku** (Alibaba, like YouTube) and **iQiyi** (Baidu, like Hulu). In 2018 the Chinese government passed a new rule to limit the import of foreign fiction and non-fiction content on all broadcast and digital platforms to 30%.

### INDIA

Sophy Sivaraman, from the **Indian Documentary Foundation**, tells us that in India the documentary industry is fledgling and mainly supported by the film festival circuit, which is dominated by the international festivals. Within India, though, festivals like **Mumbai International Film Festival** by Films Divisions, **International Documentary and Short Film Festival**

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Amelia Hapsari  
*In-Docs*

Wanya Emily  
*DocuBox*



**of Kerala** by Kerala Chalachitra Academy, and MAMI's **Mumbai Film Festival** are at the forefront.

Indian youth have been developing a taste for nonfiction, and this is a trend many are watching. While online platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime are currently the biggest buyers, theatrical distribution is still a coveted dream for many in the community, and new enterprises are emerging in response. PVR Cinema's **Vkaao** is a Theatre-on-Demand platform that independent filmmakers have started using. **Lost The Plot** creates open-air screening experiences for urban audiences, and it seems there may be a quiet but growing movement for alternative screening spaces in rising metropolitan areas.

Among the core film-focused organisations that have helped to keep the documentary industry growing, **PSBT New Delhi** stands out as the body that has been fuelling the independent documentary movement in the country for decades in multiple ways - from grants to festivals and distribution. **DocEdge Kolkata** is also a key player, bridging the gap between Indian makers and international buyers, broadcasters and distributors. And Indian Documentary Foundation's **Good Pitch India** is connecting documentary filmmakers with other sectors, opening new distribution channels and bringing a cultural shift to the ways the media ecosystem in India functions.

#### INDONESIA

Amelia Hapsari, Program Director at **In-Docs**, tells us that in Indonesia (and the broader SE Asia region), up until recently documentary films relied on community screenings organised by student groups, NGOs, film communities and doc-focused organisations such as In-

Docs. Among strong supporters of documentary films are **Engage Media**, a popular online distribution platform for social-justice documentaries; film festivals like **Festival Film Dokumenter**, **Europe On Screen**, **100% Manusia**, **Arkipel**; screening programs like **Yayasan Kampung Halaman**, **Watchdoc**, **Kineforum**, **Minikino** and many others. Except in the Philippines, where university screenings provide compensation to filmmakers, most of these screenings, despite at times bringing in huge audiences, hardly ever bring in monetary compensation. Thus, the sustainability of the field has been a challenge.

As for broadcasters, there are very few who work with documentary films from independent producers. The small gang includes NHK, Al Jazeera, and Channel News Asia... for now. New alternatives are emerging in the coming years, where OTT platforms are funding originals from Indonesia, including documentary films. Film teams hope that it will help address some of the revenue challenges that filmmakers face.

#### KENYA

Wanja Emily and the good folks at **DocuBox** in Kenya tell us that, for a long time now, public broadcast TV has remained the first sale option for most documentaries. An emerging trend, though, shows that filmmakers are completely ignoring the local broadcasters and buyers and opting for other markets instead. In addition, many filmmakers are now choosing to keep their OTT/digital and mobile rights to themselves when negotiating with distributors. (Apps like Viber and WhatsApp are becoming content distributors in some African countries). This way, they can self-release or resell to VOD platforms. Some filmmakers are even going the extra mile to create

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their own channels for distribution. For example FCIA - **Film Crew in Africa** - is a production house in Nairobi that recently did a theatrical release of their feature film 'Disconnect'; the only other way to watch it was through their online platform, **KOKO Prime**.

DocuBox has found, however, that even though many filmmakers are opting for online distribution, audiences continue to turn out in huge numbers through travelling cinema programs countrywide. "Nothing beats the intimacy of travelling cinema," says Judy Kibinge, "where intimate but vibrant and engaged group discussions happen and direct connections are made. The online experience simply doesn't deliver in the same way." For this reason, in-person community screenings are also valuable when impact is a goal. Filmmakers will partner with organisations that deal with issues highlighted in the film who then help in mobilising communities and stakeholders on the ground and in schools.

### MALAYSIA

Anna Har from Freedom Fest in Malaysia explains that creative feature-length documentaries with social themes are hardly ever featured on Malaysian free TV or in theatres. **ASTRO**, she says, is a pay TV channel that offers a couple of news service channels that screen documentaries, such as: NHK World, BBC World, Al Jazeera and Channel News Asia. However, the best way to get a documentary with a social justice or human rights themes screened is through **FreedomFilmFest**, which organises an annual human rights film festival in Malaysia. For environment-slanted issues, there's also the **Borneo Eco Film Festival (BEFF)** and **KL Eco Film Festival (KLEFF)**. In addition, independent films are

regularly screened at **Kelab Seni Filem Malaysia**. For impact production, she advises impact producers to seek out local partner organisations (NGOs) that are advocating the issue, to work with them to organise screenings and discussions and mount a campaign around the film.

### MEXICO

Inti Cordera of **DocsMX** tells us that Mexico has an old and strong documentary tradition. While there are a few break-out films every year, it is nonetheless challenging to get them in front of audiences beyond the film festival circuit. Even when national and international festivals have screened these films - many about important social, political & environmental issues - there is still a need for practical frameworks to help design impact campaigns that complement and augment traditional film distribution and exhibition efforts. To this end, DocsMX has been working to connect filmmakers, NGOs and activists to strengthen collaborations between them so that these films can have a greater impact.

Inti Cordera:

***"As never before, the cartography of documentary cinematography is strengthened by social impact. Filmmakers, navigators of reality, crush the seas to open up new horizons when they forge alliances with others to strengthen their work."***

### MIDDLE-EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

Jad Abi-Khalil, a filmmaker and director of **Beirut Cinema Platform**, tells us that in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) region, documentary films are mainly and almost



Inti Cordera  
DocsMX

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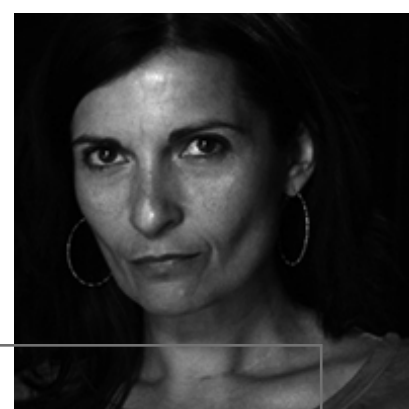
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Alex Lee  
Doc Edge



Anita Khanna  
Producer/  
Impact  
Producer

exclusively screened at film festivals. While ro\*co tells us they have been able to get a couple of independent theatres to screen docs, it is rare that multiplex movie theaters will program documentaries. For this reason, Jad stresses the importance of establishing more art-house cinemas here in countries like Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia in order to help grow the documentary scene.

As for the individualised viewing experience, television broadcasters here rarely air documentaries. However, some specialised channels like [Al Jazeera Documentary Channel](#), [Al Arabiya](#), and [2M Morocco](#) do get documentary films out to audiences. And, while streaming platforms for documentary films have not taken root in this region yet, the [Cinemoz](#) services are emergent.

#### NEW ZEALAND

Alex Lee, Director of [Doc Edge](#) in New Zealand, says that the most popular way documentaries get seen here is at festivals. Doc Edge, for example, is a leading festival for short and feature documentaries as well as specialised documentary genres. Another popular one is the [New Zealand International Film Festival](#). While there is always the theatrical option, major multiplexes rarely show documentaries, he says. And, when they do, they don't often run for very long unless they are mainstream. Of course, smaller art-house cinemas tend to be more willing to experiment with independent documentaries, but they curate based on what is offered to them by local distributors.

There are limited broadcast opportunities with [Maori TV](#) and [Prime](#). The state-owned [TVNZ](#) and the privately owned [TV3](#) rarely screen prime time one-off documentaries,

preferring factual series, although all four have on-demand services that provide a range of documentaries. These are often acquired straight to on-demand exclusively so they can't be shown elsewhere. Other cable and VOD options that provide documentary content include: [Rialto Channel](#), [Lightbox](#) and [Neon](#). Netflix is another source of documentaries for local audiences.

#### SOUTH AFRICA

Anita Khanna, Producer/Impact Producer in South Africa, also stresses the centrality of film festivals for getting documentaries to audiences. The leading festival here is the [Encounters International Documentary Film Festival](#). Occasionally, a big documentary will get a limited theatrical release in a commercial cinema with a mixed response from audiences, but many independent filmmakers don't even try it. There's a growing suspicion that traditional distribution is out of touch with a film's potential. However, there has been an exciting turn recently, as the public broadcaster [South African Broadcasting Corporation \(SABC\)](#) opened up regular Monday night airings of major local documentaries, and this has been getting a huge response on social media.

Anita Khanna:

***“All signs are that South Africans love a good old documentary,” says Anita. “We just have to find ways to get our films to the people. So, passionate filmmakers have become passionate distributors. In recent years there have been a few successful film campaigns that have leaned toward alternative and more creative ways of distributing our work. But with next to no funding for impact producing here, it means you have to get your boots dirty.”***

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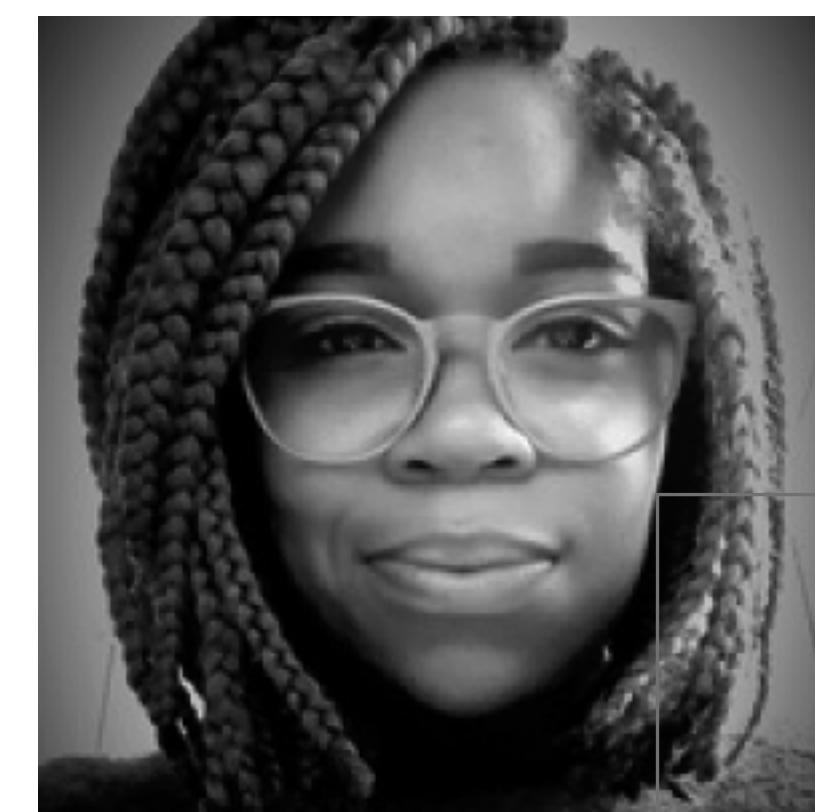
## UNITED KINGDOM

Lynn Nwokorie, Film Officer at Doc Society takes up the story In the UK, where while there is still the prestige for filmmakers for their films to be seen on BBC Storyville or BBC4; broadcast options are now very limited, so filmmakers are looking to festivals and unconventional independent distribution routes to reach British audiences. The UK has a growing number of festivals that specialise exclusively in documentary or at least have a strong interest in the genre. The most famous and largest is the Sheffield International Documentary Film Festival held in June but there are many more out there for filmmakers to follow: Open City, Aesthetica Short Film Festival, Encounters, BFI London Film Festival, Flatpack, Abandon Normal Devices and London International Documentary Festival are just some of the festivals filmmakers should consider. Many of them are BAFTA-qualifying which can often lead to greater recognition.

There are a number of distributors and sales agents in the UK that are documentary specific. Dogwoof and Altitude may be the most well known but there are many more bespoke and varied options out there. Some distributors cater specifically in sub-genres such as experimental documentary (LUX Distribution), gay cinema/documentary (Peccadillo) and there are fledgling impact focussed distributors that support campaign films (Together Films). Independent cinema chains such as Curzon, BFI, Picturehouse and ICA have also taken the dip in the documentary distribution pool.

If a film doesn't have a distributor on board, there are still ways to have a decent theatrical run - by working directly with independent cinema programmers and creating a bespoke screening tour. This will involve research and a lot of perseverance but is often the best way to make sure the right audiences are seeing the film. **The Independent Cinema Office** is an excellent resource listing all of the independent cinemas, film clubs and societies in the UK. Further investigation into the cinemas/venues of interest, its best to contact a programmer for that space or an education/community staff member who often manage one off screenings or short theatrical runs (i.e. once-a-day screening for a three day run). If they are interested they will negotiate terms and conditions for hosting a screening. Be prepared to travel with the film! Q&As and event cinema are big draws to independent cinemas!

*Please note, this advice was given in late 2018. The media landscape may have changed by the time you read this.*



Lynn Nwokorie  
Doc Society



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## TIME-TESTED ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

**A**s we've been discussing, "Impact Distribution" differs from traditional distribution.

Whereas traditional distribution is often about getting a film out far and wide and available to audiences through various platforms and channels, Impact Distribution is deliberate about which audiences to focus on for maximum impact, and what you do with them to move your efforts forward.



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In the last sections, we guided you through various considerations to help ensure you strike a distribution deal that works in concert with your impact goals. We then took a look, in broad strokes, at a few spaces and screens where different audiences tend to congregate, to urge you to consider them when building your distribution plans. And, as we've just seen, not every country or region has the same offerings, so your team will have to go deeper from wherever you are to explore your options.

Now we turn to the various activities that can help to shift newfound feelings or understandings, prompted by a film that audiences have just seen, towards action. It's also about helping audiences make connections they might not make on their own after seeing a film. Below, we offer a few classic engagement activities that most film teams will pursue to enhance a film's impact potential in these ways.

## EVENT-BASED IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

The power of live events is huge in Impact Distribution. What an event can do for your film will depend on what impression it leaves on audiences, and what you need to accomplish to change conditions.

For example, for films that are nuanced and subtle in their message, an event can be an invaluable way to drive your message home, set an important frame, or help audiences make important connections between the story and their experience.

For films that deepen understanding about underrepresented or misrepresented groups, well planned events can offer a potent, real-time opportunity to bring audiences together, face-to-face, to build bridges between them while the resonance of the film still lingers.

For films that paint a picture about the impact of policies or ideas on people's lives, events present a chance to offer additional context about them, the issues, and the solutions. The possibilities are endless.

Different film-based event designs offer different opportunities. A dialogue or town hall, developed around a film screening, can break the ice to spark discussion among people who don't typically connect. A panel discussion after a screening can offer people with different perspectives a chance to represent their views to audiences, so they can explore different facets of the issues in ways that are connected to the story. You can design an event that highlights action steps you hope audience members will take, or that features relevant programs or practices.

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Increasingly, with platforms like **OVEE**, you can even bring people together for an online event after a film's broadcast to connect like-minded people who are separated by large geographic distances.

Whatever format you choose, it is best to shape a post-screening discussion around the audiences you'll be engaging and the themes that matter most to them or the work they do. That's because the specific issues an audience faces in the communities where they are may look different from one place to the next.

For example, *Virunga* has been screened over 100 times worldwide to a wide swathe of audiences. Different audiences were positioned to do different things, so it followed that the format of events varied by audience. For example, when the team screened the film with shareholders, they aimed to educate them about the long-term viability of extractive industries and encourage them to engage actively with the company. Eventually, one of the companies' most influential shareholders, the Church of England, after heavy engagement with the company had no option but to divest from it. The Church's Ethical Investment Fund also went on to develop a new policy on extractive industries that was entirely their own but drew heavily on their experience with *Virunga*. The Church annually convenes a conference of shareholders and has great influence on how others think about ethical investments, so the ripple effect of impact is far-reaching.

But when the team showed the film to local villagers in the surrounding area of the park, a different plan was required. So, they brought in park rangers to talk to villagers afterwards and guide them through

conversations about the economic advantages of the park for the local community. They worked with local partners to ensure the shorter, tailored pieces adapted from the film would be helpful in addressing specific local questions people would have. They hoped these screenings would improve the villagers' perceptions of the park and build support for it, so they could become allies in its defence from encroachment - because that's the power this audience held. Joanna Natasegara shares this about the impact these screenings had in the villages:

***“When you walk through the villages today, you see children, even young girls, playing park ranger. This is huge in the context of the Eastern Congo, where anyone holding a gun is usually associated with war and violence. It seems a shift has occurred and park rangers are now seen as respected and trusted figures of safety and integrity in the community, that young people are inspired by. Implicit in this is that they are thus also open to and learning to understand and value all that they stand for... and a future they can aspire to.”***



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*The End of the Line* offers another example of strategic event-based engagement. The team held private screenings for the heads of businesses involved in the fish business. Here, they could watch the film with friends and colleagues, at their convenience, followed by discussion. One such screening led to **Pret A Manger founder Julian Metcalfe** announcing publicly that the film had convinced him to go sustainable.

The *No Fire Zone* campaign strategy aimed to influence an upcoming vote at the UN Human Rights Council for an inquiry into Sri Lankan war crimes. So, to maximise the film's impact, especially in countries where Sri Lanka was successfully (to a degree) portraying calls for investigations as a 'Western agenda', the team focused on special screenings that targeted lawmakers and civil servants who would ultimately be at the UN for the vote, and high level influencers in key territories. Working in collaboration with partners, they held screenings in 27 countries over five continents, organised into short tours of key regions ahead of political votes and events (often including parliamentary screenings). As a result of this targeted activity, many influencers of the UN Human Rights Council were made aware of previously hidden civil war atrocities. One year later, this resulted in the announcement of a UN Inquiry into Sri Lankan war crimes, thus achieving one of the campaign goals.

*Out in the Silence* conducted town-hall-style screening events, often in public libraries, to discuss the effects of homophobia. Through these activities they reached over 1000 people in Oregon and Pennsylvania, leading to local anti-discrimination ordinances.

**PRO TIP:** When film-based events are strategic and

focused, their likelihood of being effective and high-impact is strong, so you can often find an individual or organisational funder to pay for them. Just remember to budget for your organising time, drinks and snacks, as well as the cost of the venue.

Event Planning Materials: It's often a good idea to create materials to accompany your film, especially if you have a distributed strategy wherein you want your partners and other people to host screening events that members of your team will not be a part of. These materials might include a discussion guide that is equipped with prompts to help focus conversations on the issues that matter most to the event hosts; event planning toolkits that help event hosts decide on the best formats and venues for their events; flyer templates and other outreach materials.

#### ONLINE IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

Websites: Having a comprehensive web presence for the film and the campaign is essential because this is most often where screening hosts and audiences will go to find out how they can get involved. A website will act as a film's permanent home, which sets the tone and messaging for the impact campaign. Given this important function, there are a few key questions to consider:

- *What's the primary function of your website? To sell the film? Offer information? Inspire action?*
- *Are your film and campaign websites the same? Should they be?*
- *Is it best for the film team to host these sites, or a distributor?*
- *Will the campaign have a life independent from the film or be handed over to a partner later on?*

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Anita Khanna



Recruiting thousands of followers for each of your separate websites, Twitter and Facebook feeds is time consuming, so you want to make sure your efforts are leveraged well. Duplicating content across two sites can cause search engine issues, as well as splitting your Google search ranking in half. It can also be confusing and hard for people to navigate between two sites and the purpose for each. So, think about whether you want to centralise your campaign and promotion efforts, or how to streamline communications across two channels if that's what you have to do.

*The Interrupters* film team had separate film and campaign sites. This enabled them to hand-off the campaign site and new audiences to their core partner once screening activities ended but while impact efforts continued. The site, now maintained by **Cure Violence**, continues to educate audiences about the issues.

*Bag It* centralised all their resources in one site — **this was the place** to watch the film, download tools for becoming a Bag It town and shop for merchandise or arrange screenings. It continues to be an evergreen resource for people who want to watch the film and take action.

Social Media Campaigns: Most people think of social media as being Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, but it also covers sites like YouTube, Vimeo, Pinterest, Google+, Tumblr, Flickr and even Slideshare. See Brian Solis's **Conversation Prism** in the Geek Out section for a complete overview, or read Jeff Bullas' **blog** to learn more. Often, people build a social media presence by default, without thinking through their reasons behind it.

Having a social media presence can be important \*if\* your target audience is online. In other words, if the people you want to attract to your film or influence are online, then engaging with them there can be helpful. The key questions to ask are:

- *Where online is my audience? Which platforms do they frequent?*
- *What do I want them to do? And how do these actions contribute to my larger impact goals?*
- *What are my social media engagement goals?*

Take, for example, *Miners Shot Down*. Their entire goal was to change the discourse in South Africa about the Marikana Massacre. They knew that they needed to reach as many people as possible during a pivotal time when hearings were being held about it. They also knew that their audiences were spread out over all kinds of different online spaces.

***“Different people engage in different ways. And the world is increasingly multichannel. So our campaign needed to be also. We’re not experts though. We tried things out and learned along the way.”***

— Anita Khanna

They used a fundraising site, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and their core partner's campaign page. They used these channels to mobilise their network of allies towards

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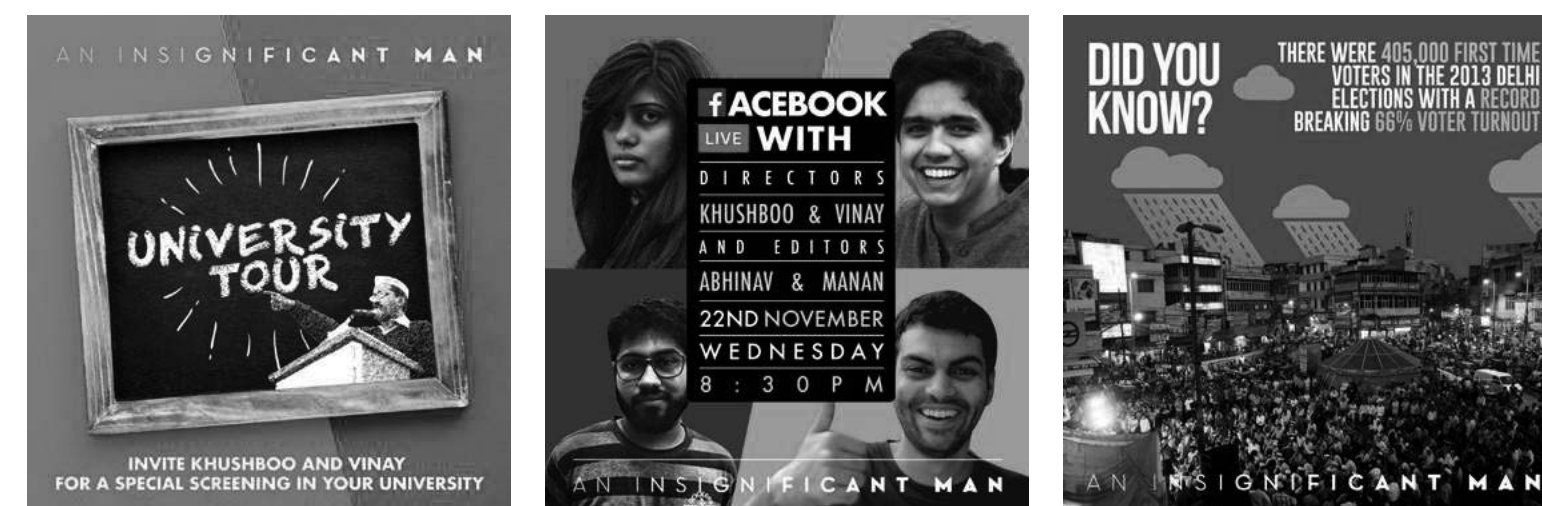
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important actions, to show up at demonstrations and to show their support when someone was arrested.

To watch filmmakers in action, it is worth looking at the crowdfunding campaign and social media generated by the team behind the Indian documentary *An Insignificant Man*. *An Insignificant Man* was the largest crowd-funded film in India with over 800 contributors raising Rs71 lakh (over \$100k). You can watch their crowdfunding pitch video right [here](#). They kept those fans highly engaged with a strong social media campaign on Facebook where they **shared the extraordinary journey** of the film and would drive bookings for screenings up and down the country.



YouTube in particular can be a powerful social networking space for filmmakers. Just take 9.70 as an example. Despite successfully getting resolution 9.70 at the forefront of coverage about the farmworker strikes into Colombian mainstream media - and an ugly government-discrediting campaign about the film - the filmmakers were being elbowed out of those debates themselves and were not being given equal airtime to defend their film. So, their online social media presence became crucial, and was the only way they were able to speak truth to power. They started recording regular YouTube videos to counteract the government's claims one by one. Then, they asked their social media fans to help them boost these videos until they were trending. They knew their social media campaign had been successful when the mainstream media started inviting them to appear on their programs, where they finally had a chance to defend the film's findings.

Remember that tone is important and should be tailored to the audiences you aim to reach. *Bag It* used an upbeat, encouraging, conversational tone - after all, the campaign is about building communities. So did the 9.70 team, which worked in their favour because they were counteracting the angry tone of the government, which helped to build their credibility. On the other hand, *The Invisible War* and *No Fire Zone*'s feeds were necessarily different; they carry gravitas and, as they are focused on changing structures, invited engagement in other ways.

Also remember that different platforms have different audience behaviours, so it's important to tailor your content so that it's platform specific. For example, consider the differences between Facebook and YouTube. A key distinction between the two is that Facebook is



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a platform to use if you want to build reach (people are constantly sharing content there with friends and family) whereas YouTube is a platform for building loyal audiences. In other words, people go to YouTube specifically to watch video content, so by creating your own channel that can be subscribed to you allow for long-term growth with deeper engagement.

Just note that, whereas there used to be a time when you could count on followers and “likes” as an indication of interest in a film or project, that time is long gone. There is no such thing as organic growth anymore. If you want to have a strong social media presence, you’ll have to pay for it out of your marketing budget.

Something to note is that most Facebook video is first consumed silently whilst it auto-plays as you scroll down past it in your timeline. A lot of people view Facebook on their phone, perhaps without headphones, so the content must be able to be viewed silently with subtitles and engaging visuals. But on YouTube, where people go specifically to watch video, you need to be more focused on the title and thumbnail, because a lot of traffic is generated through a search (YouTube is the second most used search engine in the world).

Here are a few more YouTube specific tips:

##### 1. Consistency is key.

In a digital age where we are bombarded with an abundance of information and high quality media, it is most important to find ways to become a part of your audience’s regular routine. Upload content weekly. Remain consistent with your upload time/day. Also be consistent with the video format and

create a clear brand or feel to your uploads that audiences can identify with. And finally, because the YouTube platform is unlike traditional media (i.e. there are no seasons or end-dates), always ask yourself: if this is successful, am I able to make more of these uploads? Always play the long game!

##### 2. Speak *with* your audience, not *at* them.

YouTube allows for instant feedback. The moment your video goes live, people can comment and engage with it straight away. This is a fantastic opportunity to spark conversation and grow your channel with the audience that supports it. Therefore, look for ways to interact, either in the comments section or even by acknowledging the feedback in future videos. Creating such a connection can really help your audience develop an affinity with you, your brand, your project and your cause.

**3. Repurpose your content.** Films can be very expensive in terms of time and resources, so the idea of creating regular online videos around them may seem daunting. But not all the content you put out has to be of high production quality to have an impact. Can your team create a monthly vlog, updating the community about your ongoing efforts around the film? Do you have behind the scenes footage to offer that gives added insight to supporters about your process, the cause, the protagonists or the craft? Or are there key messages in your film that could make provocative animated explainer videos?

Have a look at the Cowspiracy series as an example: [youtu.be/g1z1taw6yNw](https://youtu.be/g1z1taw6yNw).



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4.5 GLOBAL REACH

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📁 **4.6 TIME-TESTED ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

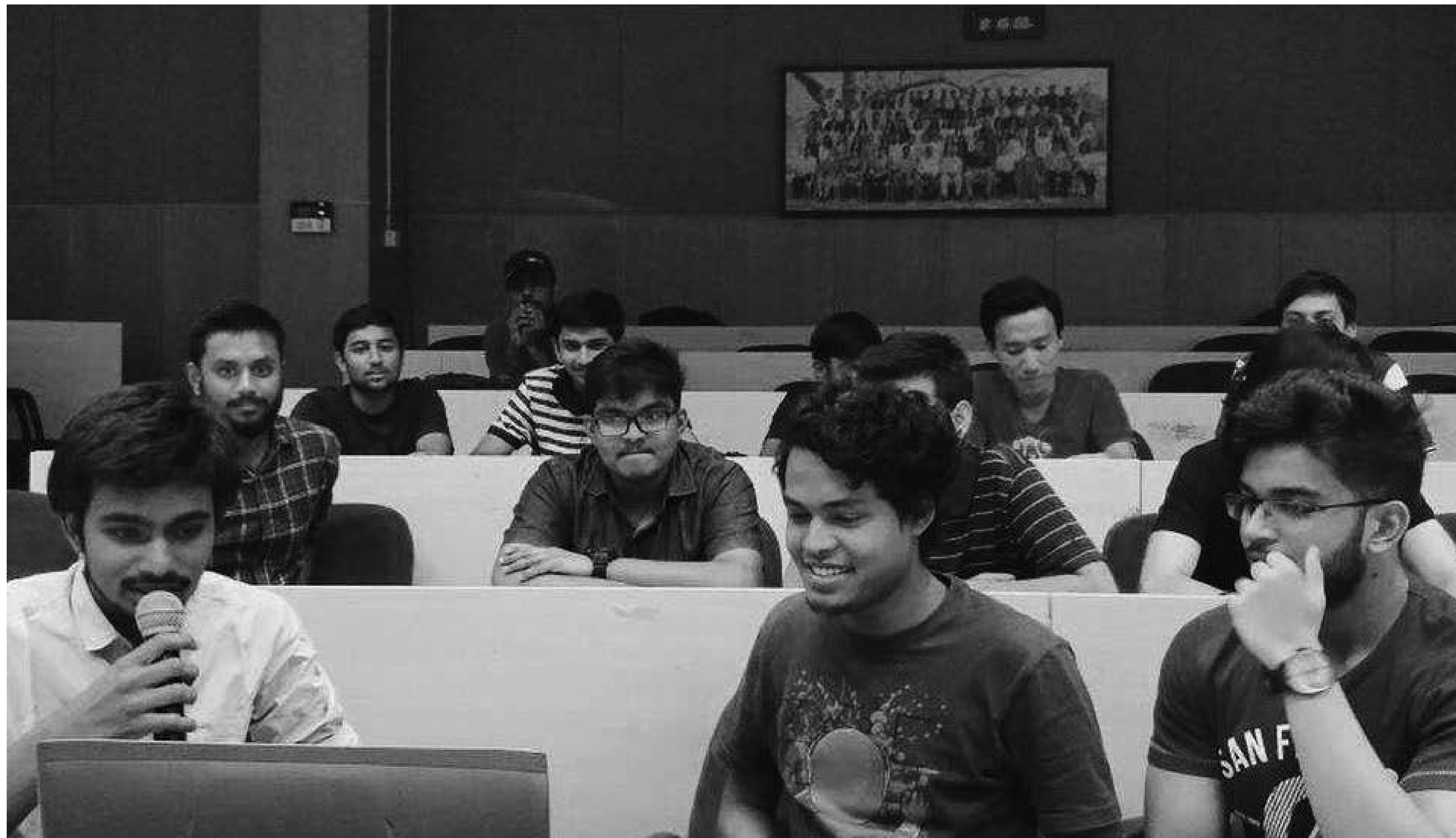
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Screening and conversation about *An Insignificant Man*





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A good starting question could be “What four video formats would you be able to create 12 pieces of for each?” - If you can answer that, then you will have a starting video program strategy for your first year of building a channel.

**PRO TIP:** Ask yourself what your reasons are for engaging online. Is it to promote your film? Great! Build a strategy around that. Is it to move people from interested to engaged? Nice! Then you need a plan to flip them from low-bar requests (reposting, signing petitions, signing up) to medium-bar asks like emailing a representative and more involved tasks such as letters to the editor, attending meetings, etc. For the latter, you probably need to stay involved.

Also consider pulling together assets to make it very easy for your partners to help you get the word out about the film, action or whatever it is you've decided is the primary focus for your social media campaign. Some of the best kits include ready-made tweets or video that is optimised for Facebook. They usually include lots of photos with snappy hashtags and URLs. If you're working with professionals, they've probably already created this.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

### SCHOOL-BASED IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

For many film teams, connecting with schools and school-aged kids is key. If that's you, it may be a good idea to work with an education specialist organisation who can help you develop education tools to accompany your film, because they have experience creating dynamic lessons aligned to different school-based standards. Many of these organisations include trained educators, former classroom teachers, curriculum developers and media specialists who know innovative ways to connect documentary films with learning objectives and the content covered.

Here are a few considerations to keep in mind:

1. With VOD and a diversity of formats, documentary films in schools have been transformed. Now educators use clips, shorts and full-length documentary films to supplement content in Language, Social Studies/History/Government and Science classes and/or use doc films as “text” to teach critical media literacy skills such as analysing point-of-view, bias, sourcing, and corroboration.
2. Your film doesn't have to be about schools or education to be relevant in the education space. We all learn through stories and in our globally connected media rich world, students are savvy consumers of stories and they need to be skilled in reading all types of media.
3. Partnerships will be key to connecting to school networks or other educational communities. Don't try and do this alone.

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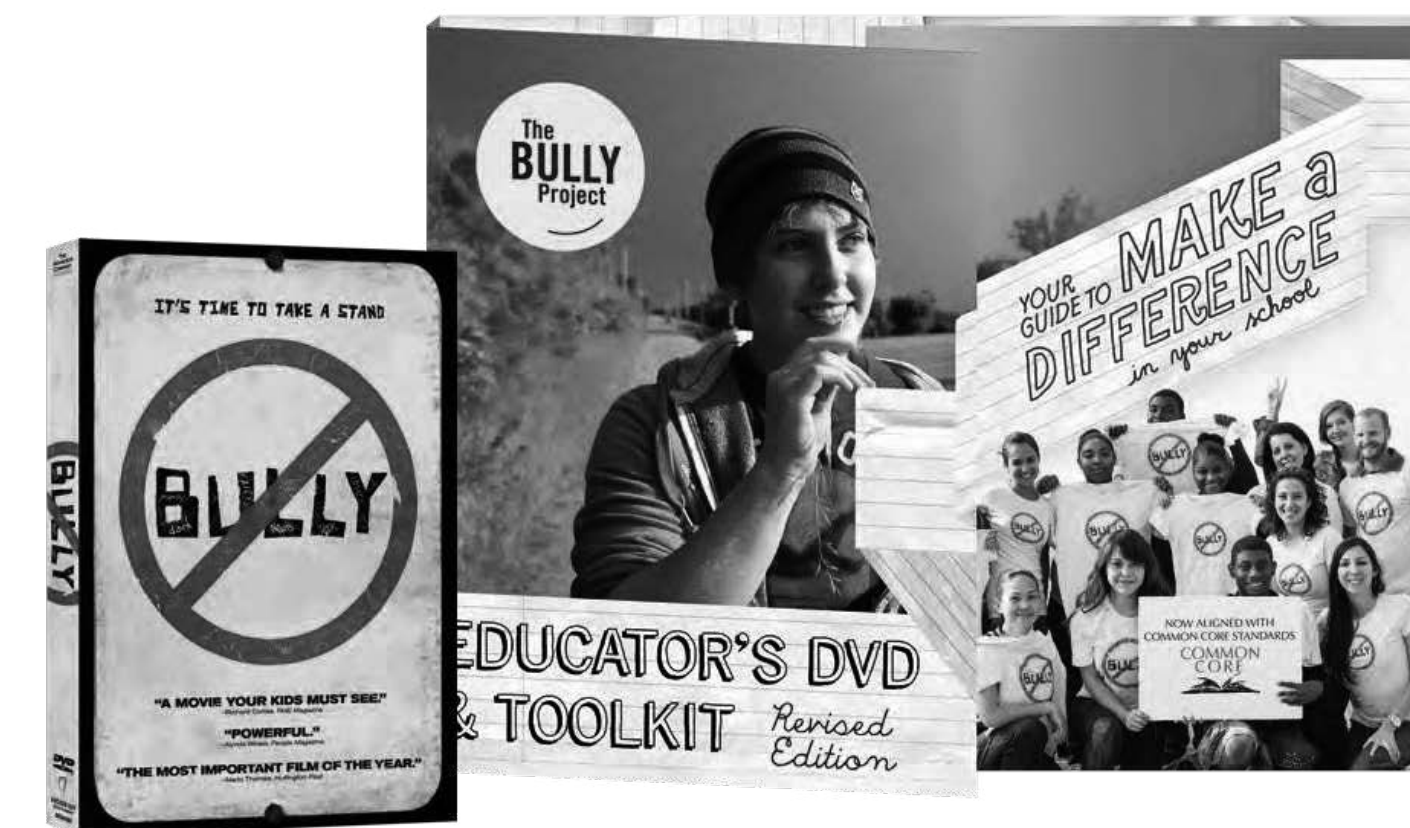
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- Budget will be necessary to create the resources and marketing materials. It is good strategy to speak about your desire to bring your film into schools early on as you secure funds for your impact campaign.
- Filmmakers considering a big educational component should attend education conferences, digital media and learning convenings, connect with digital educators online, and/or attend librarian conferences before creating educational content. Learn from the source what educators are looking for and what they need so you're not reinventing the wheel or creating unwanted material.

Take a look at these educational campaigns to get an idea of some different approaches.

*The Bad Kids* worked with PBS, ITVS and Blueshift to develop a free Educator and Student **Toolkit** with classroom lessons and professional development materials that delved into the social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practice, self-care and other themes germane to the alternative school and students in the film. A copy of the film was distributed to every alternative school in the state of California with the generous support of Sundance.

Lee Hirsch and the *Bully* team worked with a variety of educational materials specialists including Facing History and Ourselves, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Edutopia (amongst others) to develop a suite of resources for the *Bully toolkit* - including tailored materials for parents, teachers, students and also for anti-bullying advocates.



And in a similar but different example, *The American Promise* team worked with **Teaching Tolerance** (a project of the Southern Poverty Law Centre) to create a Professional Development Curriculum to help educators become more aware of the ways schools do and don't work for African American boys. With over 80% of educators in the US being white middle-class females, it was an invaluable resource to help them meet the needs of their pupils.

Firelight Media's *Tell Them We Are Rising* partnered with Independent Lens and Blueshift to create a full set of lessons for their national campaign on historically black colleges and universities as part of the new PBS series entitled *America Revisited*. The lessons were tailored to convey to high school students the rich role that HBCUs and their alumni have played in American history and culture.



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Meanwhile, the very opportunity to get a film into schools will vary hugely based on school type, the country and convention.

In the U.S., where documentary is more commonly used in educational settings, colleges and universities, expect to pay a license to show a film in a classroom, though with the increasing availability of free or inexpensive streaming sites like YouTube and Netflix, this expectation may be changing. Other countries, such as the Philippines, are used to this too.

Sweden allows films to be shown on a closed circuit network through the public broadcast system, which has recently gone online. This means VOD rights are needed to reach students there. And in Australia, a Kanopy subscription seems to be the best vehicle through which universities gain access to new documentaries.

### CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

If you want to get your film into schools, it's a good idea to create an educational curriculum to accompany it in a way that aligns with key learning outcomes - you can then develop materials or resources to help educators too if that's needed. [This helpful article](#) by Jessica Schoenbaechler breaks down curriculum guides for US school-age kids, but contains a lot of helpful info for those outside the United States also.

One example worth looking at is *Romeo is Bleeding*, a film that celebrates the power of student voices and spoken-word poetry. The team created a curriculum - "Re-Mixing Shakespeare" - to help teachers to use the film as a source of inspiration for their own units on Shakespeare,

poetry, and more. The film also screened at the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) conference and the subjects in the film facilitated multiple workshops on how to incorporate the film into their curriculum.

Another is *King in the Wilderness*, about the last three years of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. The team developed a full web platform using clips of their film alongside the full interviews of individual leaders of the American Civil Rights Movement gathered in the making of the film. A curriculum is offered on the platform that develops historical reading skills and media literacy by using film clips to highlight key topics in the film, and enhancing understanding with relevant interview segments so that students can have the experience of using first-person accounts to construct historical understanding. To get more ideas you can peruse the ITVS [listings](#), where resources and clips are collected and lesson plans/ other resources are made available for teachers to use free of charge. POV also creates first class discussion guides and lessons for their documentary films. And check out Doc Society's [Doc Academy](#), a free website for teachers by teachers which provides lesson plans & documentary films relating directly to the UK National Curriculum, which has now launched in the U.S. to include films and lessons for Social Studies, English and Science teachers. Films are selected, clips are licensed, veteran educators write lessons, and together these resources are integrated into the platform.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & FURTHER EDUCATION

We are also seeing documentary films being used for professional development & training, not just in kids'

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classrooms. For example, *Escape Fire* was used by healthcare professionals in a module for training, and extracts from **Chosen** by True Vision were used by healthcare professionals working in sexual assault and child abuse.

The Norwegian film team behind the forthcoming documentary *Girl In The Mirror* have partnered with Norwegian universities and the subjects of the film to create online resources based around the film for teachers and trainee teachers - again to spot early signs of abuse in school populations.

*The End Game*, a documentary short about palliative care, created professional development materials for clinicians, caregivers and families facing end-of-life decisions. Screened at conferences, hospitals and hospice facilities, the film and materials provide an opening for people to navigate very difficult conversations.

A discussion guide to accompany screenings of RBG was created to screen the film in law firms seeking to explore issues of gender and equity in the law through the story of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

*Audrie & Daisy* tells the story of two young teens sexually assaulted and then later re-victimised online. The educational and professional development materials created in partnership with the non-profit organisation Futures Without Violence aims to give non-profit organisations and parents the necessary framing, background and resources to navigate issues of sexual assault and social media.

*Heroin(e)*, in partnership with the Center for Investigative Reporting, created a Field Guide for public health

professionals, non-profit organisations and families to use as they address the opioid epidemic.

### INFLUENCER ENGAGEMENT

Sometimes, when attempting to engage influencers, you need a different set of strategies than you would when your efforts are strictly community-based, partner-based, or online. We offer two kinds of influencers as examples of the kinds of factors to consider.

#### ENGAGING POLICYMAKERS:

Newly elected politicians or those with a special interest in the issue can often help push the campaign forward in the right way. The *Invisible War* team deliberately kept the message of their film bi-partisan and anti-assault rather than anti-military. By doing so, they were able to reach all sides of the political spectrum. The team also arranged policymaker screenings months ahead of the film's theatrical release. This offered government officials a window of opportunity to react, take action and present solutions to the film's issues. Both of these tactics tied directly to the team's impact goals, not their marketing or distribution goals.

The result of this lobbying was the largest host committee ever for a film screening on Capitol Hill, and a 'standing room only' screening at the Library of Congress.

The *No Fire Zone* team focused their efforts on reaching high level policy makers all over the world to expose the truth around the genocide in Sri Lanka and call the government to accountability. They leveraged their partnerships with **Human Rights Watch** and



*Good Pitch Miami, 2017*

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David Cameron



**Amnesty International** and the connections these institutions had to launch the film at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Those present included over 200 diplomats and country missions. Director Callum Macrae recalls the reaction of some of those present at the screening:

***“There was one African delegation who, when they saw [the film], said to me afterwards “The Sri Lankans pulled the wool over our eyes.” There was a clear understanding, when presented with the evidence, that the Sri Lankan government cannot be trusted to investigate themselves, and that they are engaged in a very hypocritical exercise when they pretend that this is about Western interference. And that had an effect on the UN vote. Just from one screening.”***

—  
Callum Macrae  
Director, *No Fire Zone*

The film team also timed its policymaker engagement strategically. The screening was held in advance of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which took place in 2013 in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. Callum Macrae, who travelled to Colombo to cover the CHOGM as a member of the press, found himself mobbed by journalists at the media centre on his arrival, due to a statement by the British Prime Minister about his impending trip to the meeting.

***“No Fire Zone is one of the most chilling documentaries I’ve watched. It brings home the brutal end to the civil war and the immense suffering of thousands of innocent civilians who kept hoping that they would reach safety, but tragically many did not. Many of the images are truly shocking... I will raise my concerns when I see President Rajapaksa next week in Colombo. And I will tell him that if Sri Lanka doesn’t deliver an independent investigation, the world will need to ensure an international investigation is carried out instead.”***

—  
Former Prime Minister David Cameron

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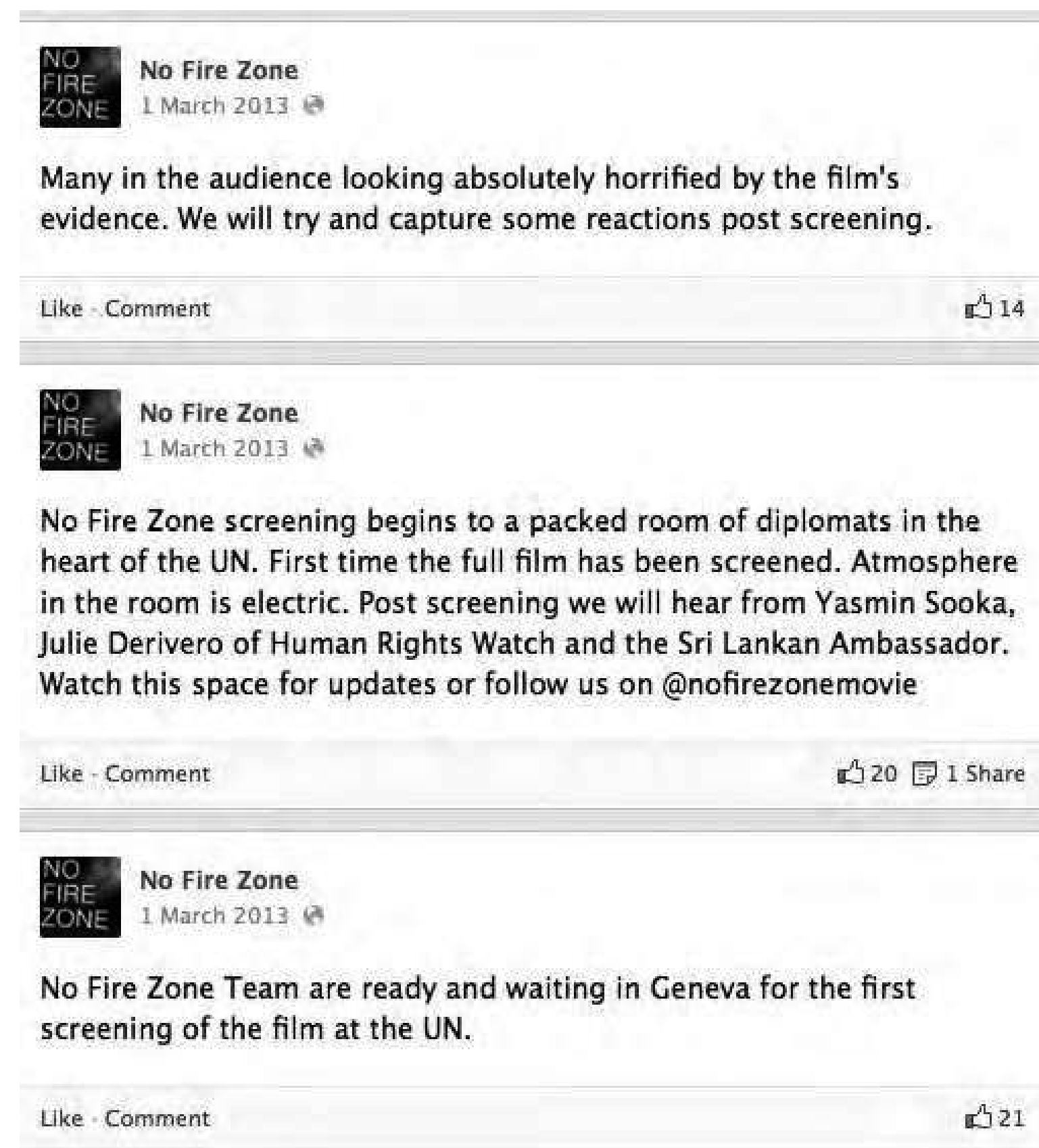
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He also took to social media, tweeting his reaction to his 2.5 million followers, and including the Twitter handle of the President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa.



The best way to engage policymakers will depend on your issue map, the current political climate and what you're hoping to accomplish. Will Jenkins, a Film Policy Strategist who worked in the White House and Congress, and Caty Borum Chattoo, Director of the Center for Media & Social Impact, offer the following tips for engagement:

- 1. Find the momentum.** Films rarely have a policy impact in a vacuum. Many of the most successful film impact campaigns have built on the momentum of years of work by often-unknown advocates and grassroots organisations. Films can be catalysts to propel these efforts forward at the right time and place. That's why it's so critical to have strong relationships with advocacy partners, who best know what's going on.
- 2. Look at all your impact options.** It may be tempting to focus your efforts on a national level, but sometimes it's too gridlocked for progress. However, wins at the local level can lead to wins at the national level.
- 3. Partner well. Strong advocacy partners who understand the policy landscape and the key players are essential.** Partners with experience and good relationships with the policymakers that the film team wants to engage will be crucial allies who can guide your team in how to move the issue forward. These partners can also keep the campaign going after the film.

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**4. Find the right policymakers.** A little research can help you find policymakers who work on an issue or have shown commitment to an issue over their career. Ideally, they'll also have a track record of policy successes. Remember that their staff can have significant expertise and influence too.

**5. Nothing is ever final in politics.** Bills may pass but not be signed; laws may not be enforced or may be changed; politicians may be voted out of office. So, even after a policy victory, vigilance is needed, and no matter how daunting the challenge, there is always an opportunity to make a difference if you are prepared.

#### GEEK OUT

#### IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

A post screening discussion in Kenya of the South African documentary *Strike A Rock* by Aliko Saragas





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30 girls in Kabi Nazrul Bidyapith School in Satkhira, Bangladesh watch the 500th screening of the *Women and Girls Lead Global* documentary, *Girl Connected* in Bangladesh.





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**ENGAGING CELEBRITIES:**

If it's important to your impact campaign to build broad public attention on an issue, it can be incredibly helpful to have an appropriate celebrity to bring attention to your film. *Ellen's* emotional segment with David and Tina Long, subjects of *Bully*, reached a huge audience during its transmission and has been viewed online over a million times since:



But you may be able to go a lot further because some celebrity figures offer more than a press op.

A trusted messenger. The right celebrity figure may also be the right one to get the attention of your target audience. In other words, that segment of your audience may pay closer attention to what you have to say with their endorsement. Ellen Degeneres, for example, is an influential figure among LGBT people and women ages 25-54, so a filmmaker can trust that her endorsement

would go a long way with them, both in terms of encouraging her audience to watch a film and also encouraging related actions.

Credibility. Some celebrities may have a degree of proximity or relative expertise on the issues your film address, making them an authority in their own right. Rapper and activist MIA lent her support to the *No Fire Zone* campaign - having fled Sri Lanka's civil war with her family when she was 11, she was keen to promote and support the film's messages to her followers on Twitter:



MIA's involvement also helped bring other celebrity advocates to the issue:





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Supporting *The House I Live In's* campaign, John Legend spoke out on the war on drugs on CNN and MSNBC, emphasising the need for a more common sense approach to drug policy, an issue he knows well as a respected criminal justice activist. Scenes from the film were also showcased in an exclusive music video premiering on CNN, which provided huge reach and also helped mobilise his base.

Important connections. It's all about who you know. Celebrities like John Legend, who also work on the issues, can also help make important introductions and get your film to the right people. Leonardo DiCaprio, an avid environmental justice activist, UN Ambassador and "Messenger of Peace" used his profile to support *Virunga*. In fact, he became an executive producer and his foundation went on to support the park financially as well. He has remained involved well beyond the film's main distribution life.

To get started, research whether any celebrities are already interested in or sympathetic to your film's issue and if you are aligned around strategy. Have they spoken about it before in the press or on TV? Have they attended public hearings or rallies on the issue? Don't just go for any famous name - look for one that's authentically connected to your story.

Approaching celebrities without any prior contact can be difficult, but may be possible through one of your partnerships, so ask around. If not, go back to basics - tweet them the trailer or website, invite them to a screening, and send them a copy of the film.

Sometimes celebrity support for your film or issue can develop organically, or even take you by surprise - so be

prepared to leverage that, too.

Having watched *Give Up Tomorrow*, Martin Gore of Depeche Mode was so moved by the film that he made an appeal to all his fans to join the Free Paco Now movement. He also decided to wear his Free Paco Now t-shirt for every single date of the band's stadium tour, including two crucial dates in Madrid and Barcelona:

***'The manager of Depeche Mode got in touch with us [saying] Martin had seen the doc and was outraged. He [asked] how [they] could help. We pointed him to the 'Free Paco Now' campaign website. First thing [Martin] did was post a pic of himself in a ['Free Paco Now'] T-shirt... on the band's Facebook page, which has 7.1 million followers. We are thrilled and amazed that Martin is doing this. On a personal level, having grown up listening to Depeche Mode's music, I am flabbergasted.'***

— Marty Syjuco, *Give Up Tomorrow*

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***'I saw Give Up Tomorrow on PBS in the United States. I was appalled at the judicial system on view. The idea of anyone spending a large part of his life in jail for something that he didn't do doesn't, and shouldn't, sit well with me or anyone...I felt that I should do what I could to [call attention] to it, in the hope that something can be done. I first wore the shirt at the Barcelona and Madrid concerts — the first two shows after Christmas. After the show, a lot of Spaniards asked me about the T-shirt and what it was about. When I started to tell the story, they stopped me in my tracks, saying that they remembered hearing about the prisoner exchange but assumed that Paco was now out and free! This shows how easy it is to get forgotten and why I feel I need to keep reminding people'***

—  
Martin Gore, Depeche Mode



Martin Gore of Depeche Mode gets behind the *Free Paco Now* campaign (from the documentary film *Give Up Tomorrow*)

Once you do get the attention of a celebrity, just be certain you know why you need their support and what exactly it is you want them to do. And as ever, be realistic about what you're asking busy people to do.

Start simple: ask them to tweet about the issue to their followers. Then, if they're game, you might ask for a quote for your film poster. Or perhaps they might be prepared to issue a statement of support, host a special screening or Q&A or give an interview on the issue to the press. See how you go.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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A screening of *An Insignificant Man* in the Oddbird Theatre, India



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

**Brian Solis's Conversation Prism**  
[conversationprism.com](http://conversationprism.com)

**Hootsuite's Social Media Strategy Guide**  
<https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-marketing-plan/>

**Neon Media's Infographic on the use of social media**  
[neonbrand.com/social-media/the-biggest-shift-since-the-industrial-revolution/](http://neonbrand.com/social-media/the-biggest-shift-since-the-industrial-revolution/)

**MailChimp's Voice and Tone website**  
[voiceandtone.com](http://voiceandtone.com)

**Buffer App's best times to post**  
[blog.bufferapp.com/best-time-to-tweet-post-to-facebook-send-emails-publish-blogposts](http://blog.bufferapp.com/best-time-to-tweet-post-to-facebook-send-emails-publish-blogposts)

**Quicksprout University on SEO, blogging and online advertising**  
[quicksprout.com/university/](http://quicksprout.com/university/)

**Buffer's brilliant guide to SEO (for beginners)**  
[blog.bufferapp.com/beginners-guide-to-seo](http://blog.bufferapp.com/beginners-guide-to-seo)

**Brian Solis on authenticity online**  
<https://www.briansolis.com/2009/08/why-authenticity-matters/>

**Hubspot's blog post on the impact of using photos**  
[blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/33800/Photos-on-Facebook-Generate-53-More-Likes-Than-the-Average-Post-NEW-DATA.aspx](http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/33800/Photos-on-Facebook-Generate-53-More-Likes-Than-the-Average-Post-NEW-DATA.aspx)

**All of Hubspot's Blog**  
[blog.hubspot.com/marketing](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing)

**KISSMetrics on why you might consider SlideShare (seriously)**  
[blog.kissmetrics.com/marketers-guide-to-slideshare/](http://blog.kissmetrics.com/marketers-guide-to-slideshare/)

#### INFLUENCER ENGAGEMENT

**For more tips and context about policymaker engagement in the U.S., read the full report: "Movies & Grassroots Community Engagement: Documentary Films & State and Local Public Policy in the United States"**  
[cmsimpact.org/MoviesGrassrootsCommunityEngagement](http://cmsimpact.org/MoviesGrassrootsCommunityEngagement)

**We also recommend reading this report, which includes a policy impact case study on Bully.**  
[cmsimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CMSI\\_Washington.pdf](http://cmsimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CMSI_Washington.pdf)

**And this example of hyper-local policymaker engagement from *Chasing Ice***  
[dearcongressmantiberi.com/about-ba](http://dearcongressmantiberi.com/about-ba)

#### ENGAGING CELEBRITIES

**The Opportunity Agenda published this article in 2019 with ten tips for working with influencers to spark and sustain change.**  
[opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/working-cultural-influencers](http://opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/working-cultural-influencers)



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## WHEN IMPACT & DISTRIBUTION COME TOGETHER

Let's take a closer look at how some of the film teams featured in our library combined traditional distribution pathways with more innovative strategies to target and engage audiences while keeping front and centre the change goal, the primary change dynamic at work and the target audience that needed to see the film the most in order for it to make a difference.

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### CHANGING MINDS: *THE ACT OF KILLING*

The *Act of Killing* team hoped to catalyse a fundamental change in how the 1965-66 genocide was understood, both in Indonesia and internationally. In the language of Impact Dynamics, they needed to change minds. But political censorship prevented the distribution of the film in commercial cinemas in Indonesia, so whilst a traditional distribution model was deployed for the film's international release (including a major run of film festivals and continuing with cinema releases in multiple territories, culminating in an Oscar nomination), a different approach was taken to allow the film to reach the Indonesian public.

Starting with invitation only screenings, the team avoided the need for the film to be reviewed formally by censors (which could have led to a ban, making it illegal to even own a copy of the film, let alone screen it).



Working with civil society and human rights groups, as well as a host of other partners, the film team opted instead to run covert 'invitation only' screenings for key Indonesian influencers. Harnessing the power of opinion-forming journalists, writers, educators and historians allowed them to then open up a public discourse about the reality of the genocide for the first time in history. As the campaign gained momentum, eventually the team were able to arrange public screenings in Indonesia itself and the film was geoblocked for free download across the country.

It's worth dwelling for a moment on the range of different screenings that the film team deployed. With audiences ranging from 30 to over 700 people, the team worked with civil society groups to identify where and how to show the film, from a remote jungle location where locals gathered around an old tube television, to the biggest multiplex in Jakarta, where people crammed in and stood in the aisles.

**See impact & distribution diagram on next page.**  
Another example of **changing minds** is *Miners Shot Down*.



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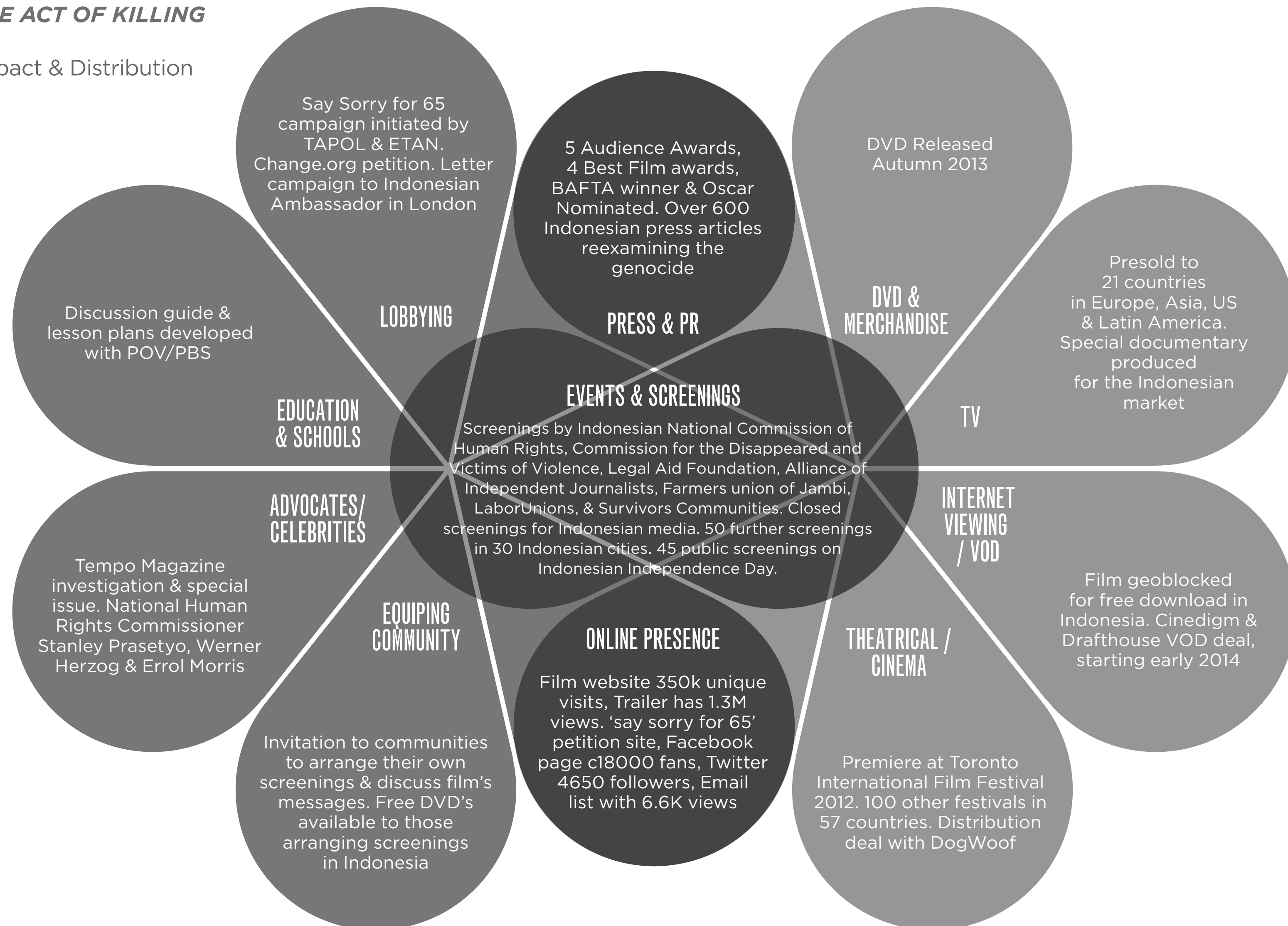
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**CHANGING MINDS:  
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### CHANGING BEHAVIOURS: *WEAPON OF WAR*

The *Weapon of War* team worked with the army to deliver screenings and educational materials at military camps throughout the DRC. As screening options were limited within the country, the filmmakers set up their own Mobile Cinema Foundation, allowing them to show the film in a variety of locations, from remote villages to military camps. By doing this, the film team managed to reach around 35% of the entire military population, as well as rebel fighters and other guerrilla groups.

Special edits of the film were made, each addressing a number of important topics related to human rights and military conduct and, after each screening, a programme of debates, discussions and other educational tools was delivered by specially trained facilitators. The film team then went on to produce two further edits of the film, specifically designed for young people and couples, addressing the issue of sexual violence and working with local community and civil society groups to promote discussion and dialogue around the film's themes.



Picture courtesy of Mobile Cinema Foundation

Outside of the DRC, the team opted for deals for the TV and cinema rights to the film, and it was also shown at a number of relevant international film festivals, including the International Film Festival on Human Rights. However, they retained the right to sell DVD copies of the film itself for educational purposes, and this allowed them to continue to reach relevant audiences in both DRC and beyond with the film's message.

**See impact & distribution diagram on next page.** Another example of **changing behaviours** is *Blackfish* and *Chasing Coral*

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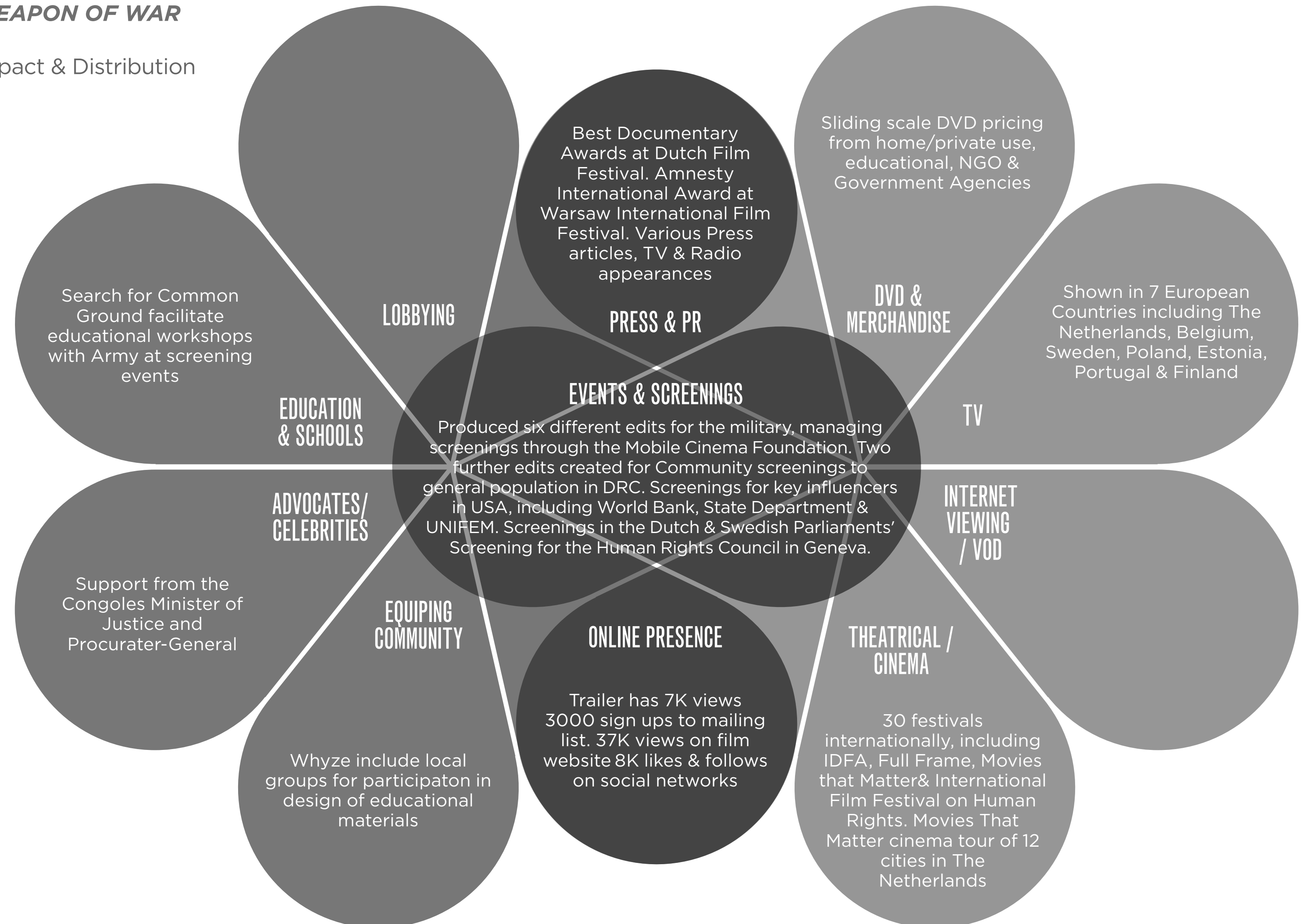
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### CHANGING STRUCTURES: *THE INVISIBLE WAR*

*The Invisible War* film team focused their efforts on lobbying influencers, sharing the film with them some months before the its full cinematic release. After the film's world premiere at Sundance, the team went about using non-theatrical screenings on Capitol Hill to recruit advocates to the campaign and to mobilise support from those at the highest levels of government for policy change. This allowed momentum to build before the film's message gained traction in the more traditional ways.



Continuing their work with a sustained publicity campaign which included speaking engagements, interviews and social media activity, by the time the film had been nominated for an Academy Award, policymakers and government were under significant pressure to introduce legislation. Cinedigm took theatrical rights and, whilst the film only took \$60,000 at the box office, the team's impact distribution strategy has meant that the film's impact and reach extended far beyond those who had paid for a ticket to see it at a cinema. In the United States the film was shown on HBO, and Roco Films International took the US educational rights.

**See impact & distribution diagram on next page.** Another example of **changing structures** is *Granito, The House I Live In* and *9.70*.

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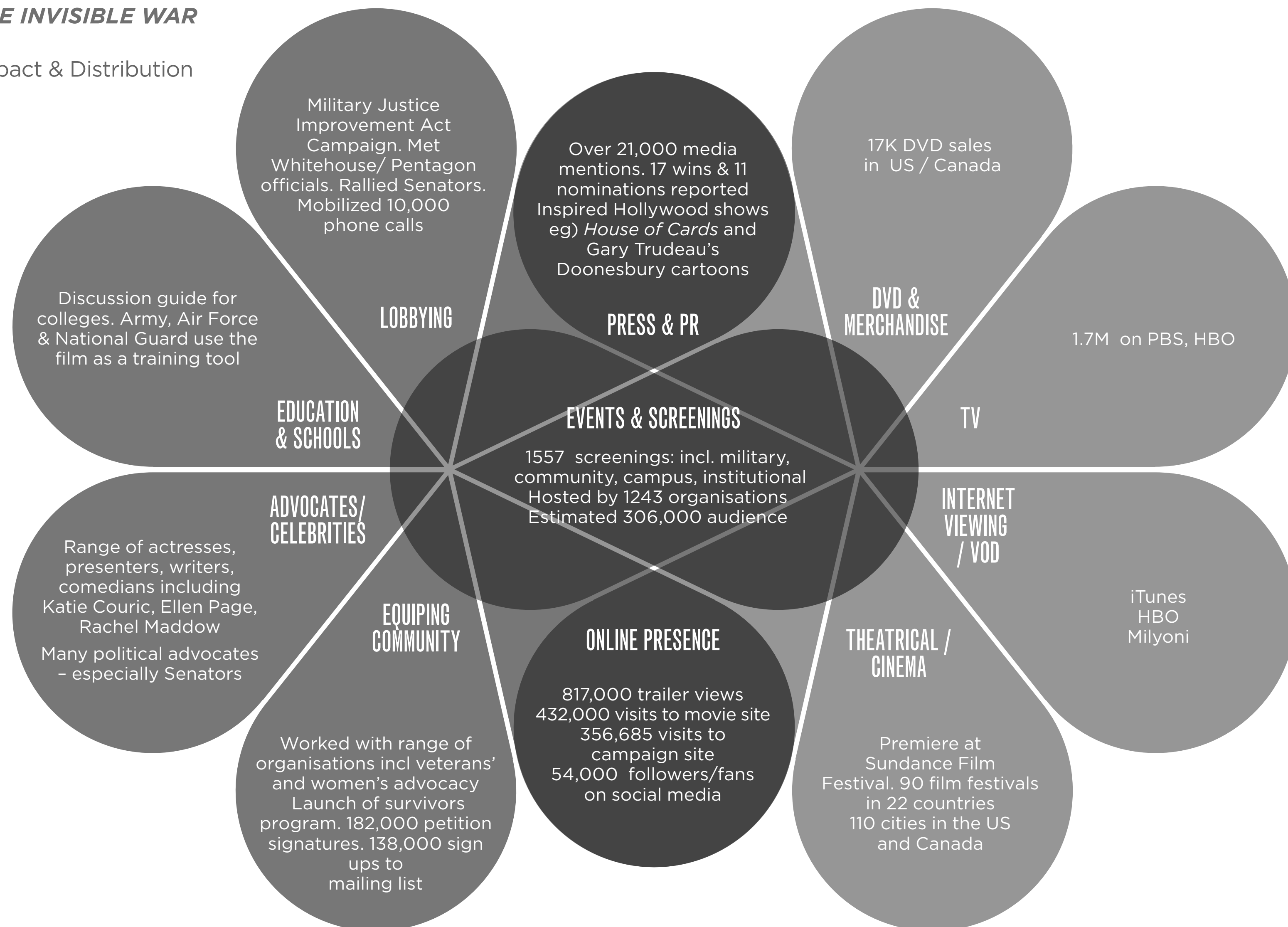
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**CHANGING STRUCTURES:  
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## BUILDING COMMUNITIES: *BUDRUS*

The *Budrus* team wanted to raise the profile of non-violent campaigners working towards peace in the Middle East by demonstrating how effective peaceful movements could be at creating change. Using ‘building communities’ as their primary Impact Dynamic, the team focused on facilitating discussion and dialogue around the film’s messages with those invested in the issues, both in Israel, Palestine and abroad.



Non-theatrical screenings of the film were a really effective tool for achieving their aims of reframing the conflict. The team also wanted to equip others inspired by *Budrus* to build their own non-violent movements for change, so much of their Impact Distribution activities focused on inviting others to arrange a screening, start a discussion group or even travel to the region as a volunteer.

**See impact & distribution diagram on next page.**

Another example of **building communities** is *American Promise* and *Please Remember Me*.

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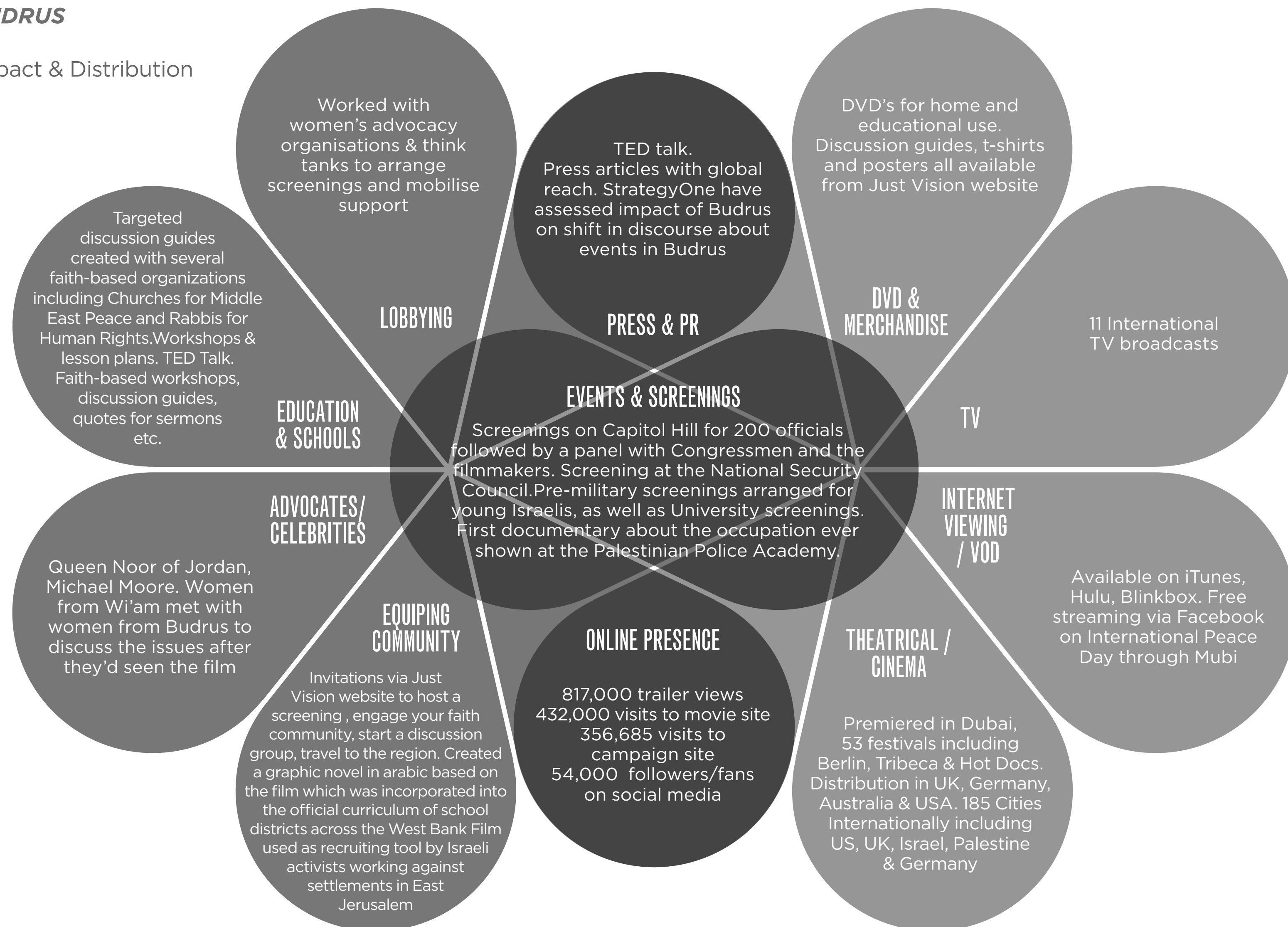
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### BUILDING COMMUNITIES: *BUDRUS*

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## SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE

So, you've considered all the advice and decided on an Impact Distribution approach. Now you've got to ensure you make the right deal, or group of deals, that work for your strategy. Before you sign on the dotted line, consider how your Impact Distribution plan measures up against the following:



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<b>PERSONAL</b>	Your artistic goals?	What you want to gain personally from distribution?	How long you want to be involved?
<b>PRODUCTION</b>	What are the financial needs and obligations of the production?	Is the whole team aligned to the same Impact Distribution goals?	Does the team have the capacity to deliver on the impact distribution plans?
<b>IMPACT</b>	How far does the distribution plan serve your impact goal?	How far does the distribution plan serve the needs of relevant movements?	How far does the distribution plan rely on your subjects and what are their needs?
<b>STRATEGIC AUDIENCE</b>	How far does the distribution plan allow you to connect with your most strategic audience?	How far do you have flexibility and control to share the film as the campaign requires?	Does your audience have needs and are they being served by the Impact Distribution plan?

Remember the following to ensure you get the most from the deals you're going to make:

**HAVE A PLAN BEFORE YOU START TO NEGOTIATE**

Know what you're not prepared to budge on - whether that's direct sales rights, your campaign website or the rights to community screenings. That way, whether you're working through a sales agent or doing it yourself, you'll know which parts of the flower you're not willing to give away.

**EQUIP YOURSELF WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO GET THE DEAL DONE**

Think about working with a negotiator to get the deal signed. This may be a lawyer or it may be a sales agent, it may even be someone in your team. The key thing is to make sure they are an experienced negotiator and are on top of the current trends in the distribution landscape.

**APPROPRIATE TIMING**

Does your impact campaign depend on certain timings, for example a major conference, an international governmental meeting or an individual doing something? Can your distributor work to the same schedule? If they

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are responsible for the film's marketing, can they work with you to deliver an integrated campaign that amplifies your impact work? Being clear upfront of your intentions can help improve your deal. Co-ordinated strategy and execution are what you're after.

Most films don't get signed at festivals, but whenever or wherever you take a meeting with a distributor or sales agent (who sells for you to distributors) use this handy checklist to ensure you're thinking straight before you even think about signing a deal:

How do the deals on offer measure up to your priorities? Tick the boxes to compare:

**AND WHATEVER TIME OF DAY OR NIGHT YOU SIGN, CONGRATULATIONS!**

<b>CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>DEAL 1</b>	<b>DEAL 2</b>
Your artistic goals?		
What you want to gain personally from distribution?		
How long you want to be involved?		
To the financial needs and obligations of the production?		
The team's capacity to deliver on the impact distribution plans?		
How far does the distribution plan serve your key impact goal?		
How far does the distribution plan serve the needs of relevant movements?		
How far does the distribution plan reply on your subjects and are their needs served?		
How far does the distribution plan allow you to connect with your most strategic audience?		
How far do you have flexibility and control to share the film as the campaign requires?		
Does the audience have needs and are they served by the Impact Distribution plan?		



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### Distribution Bulletins

[peterbroderick.com/distributionbulletins/distributionbulletins.html](http://peterbroderick.com/distributionbulletins/distributionbulletins.html)

Peter Broderick's website aggregates his articles on distribution strategy. This [page](#) gives a good set of guidelines to consider from the outset.

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#### Distribution Advice

[stfdocs.com/film/distribution-advice-for-2014/](http://stfdocs.com/film/distribution-advice-for-2014/)

Thom Powers' great piece collects the best of the industry's advice on distribution in 2014.

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#### How to Get Ready for That Film Festival

[stfdocs.com/film/distribution-advice-for-2014/](http://stfdocs.com/film/distribution-advice-for-2014/)

Ted Hope tells us everything you need to know about film festivals.

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#### Jon Reiss

[jonreiss.com/blog](http://jonreiss.com/blog)

Jon Reiss's blog helps filmmakers navigate the distribution and marketing landscape.

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#### Crowdfunding for Independence

[s3.amazonaws.com/seedandsparkcontent/sites/default/files/downloadable\\_pdf/140413+Crowdfunding+for+Independence+2015+handbook\\_0.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/seedandsparkcontent/sites/default/files/downloadable_pdf/140413+Crowdfunding+for+Independence+2015+handbook_0.pdf)

Seed & Spark have created a brilliant and useful step-by-step guide to crowdfunding.

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***“At Sundance, the high mountain air — combined with jitters, lack of sleep, possibly a hangover — can have a deleterious effect. Counter this by arriving prepared, with 1) a well-thought out distribution strategy, 2) a solid plan to carry out that strategy, and 3) a team to help you. ‘I want as many people to see my film as possible’ and ‘my film belongs in theaters’ doesn’t mean much — there’s no strategy there. ‘The distributor will take care of that’ is not a plan. ‘How hard can it be for me to do it myself’ is not assembling a team.”***

Brenda Coughlin  
Producer, *Dirty Wars*



🎬 5.1 WHY SHORTS?

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# 5.0 MAKING & MOVING SHORTS



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## WHY SHORTS?

**W**hen we wrote the first Impact Field Guide back in 2013, we did so with feature-length documentaries in mind. But there is huge renewed interest in shorts and we decided it was time to dig into the ins and outs of making and moving them for impact.

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In case you need to be convinced, short form film was listed among SXSW 2018’s “12 most significant trends.” Distributors like Netflix and Amazon are now acquiring some short form docs content, and new spaces have emerged for them. This includes: POV Shorts, a new broadcast streaming series for short-form non-fiction content; New York Times Op-Docs, a video version of the newspaper’s OpEd section; and CNN’s Great Big Story, a 24-hour short-form video channel. Quibi is Jeffrey Katzenberg and Meg Whitman’s mobile viewing platform made specifically for short form narrative and nonfiction content. And in 2017, Sundance Festival launched its Indie Episodic section, designed as a dedicated showcase for emerging independent voices and their work,

which featured documentary shorts series. Facebook even **threw its hat in the ring**, seeking shows with 15 minute long episodes.

**WHY ARE SHORTS ON THE RISE NOW?**

The answer depends on who you speak to. Some say it’s driven by audience demand; people have come to desire and even expect documentary to accompany written journalism, a trend which is now visible on almost every news platform.

Many attribute it to the narrowing attention spans of audiences that come with the social media age which favour shorter content. Netflix **recently revealed** that close to 25 percent of its streaming globally happens over mobile networks.

Others say shorts are on the rise because content creation is just more accessible and there are many more platforms for ease of publishing - albeit often without financial reward or guarantees of audiences. Or that the new wave of shorts is driven by filmmakers who are creating and distributing content that challenges mainstream trends, ideas, or voices, and which rarely make it through to traditional gatekeepers. To that point the **2018 Center for Media and Social Impact at American University report** finds that filmmakers in their survey sample who were from racial and ethnic minority groups were significantly more likely to be making short-form films (18% makers of colour compared to 7% white



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## 🎬 5.1 WHY SHORTS?

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filmmakers), and less likely to be making feature-length films than white filmmakers (50% compared to 64%).

What has always been true is that sometimes, shorter is best. Many impact-focused film teams will tell you that the communities they work with have particular needs, and often it's not a feature-length film.

As individualised online viewing experiences become more common, some organisers say it can be helpful to have something that can be digested and circulated online versus having to gather people in physical spaces for several hours at a time. While shorter pieces, that can be integrated into pre-existing meetings rather than devoting limited resources towards organising a separate screening event, are really helpful.

A rapid-response short can be incredibly satisfying to produce and publish in fast-moving social and political contexts. Often, in those contexts, speed really matters - because the social problems our films address, and the movements they support, often can't wait for alignment with a feature-length production schedule.

One example is the short film "[A Message From the Future With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#)," a seven-minute film narrated by the congresswoman and illustrated by Molly Crabapple which was published on [The Intercept](#) in April 2019.

Set a couple of decades from now, this short film is a rejection of the idea that climate dystopia is a forgone conclusion. This seven-minute postcard from the future is about how, in the nick of time, a critical mass of humanity in the largest economy on earth came to believe they

were actually worth saving. Because, as Ocasio-Cortez says in the film, our future has not been written yet and "we can be whatever we have the courage to see."

Naomi Klein recounts;

***"Back in December, I started talking to Crabapple — the brilliant illustrator, writer, and filmmaker — about how we could involve more artists in the Green New Deal vision. Most art forms are pretty low carbon, after all, and cultural production played an absolutely central role during Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. We thought it was time to galvanise artists into that kind of social mission again — but not in a couple of years, if politicians and activists manage to translate what is still only a rough plan into law. No, we wanted to see Green New Deal art right away — to help win the battle for hearts and minds that will determined whether it has a fighting chance in the first place."***

So a creative plan was hatched. And the resulting film combining fact, fiction and visual art, co-directed by Kim Boekbinder and Jim Batt and co-written by Ocasio-Cortez and Avi Lewis, published within 4 months flat, was viewed over 6 million times within the first 48 hours of release.



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And for some filmmakers, shorts offer a way to break up the multi-year labour of a feature doc, helping them to build early buzz before a longer film's release. Often, filmmakers will use the short they create to build confidence in their broader film and project, raise additional funds towards the completion and distribution, and even solidify partnerships.

In this chapter we'll explore practices, impact considerations and trends related to making and moving shorts. We'll also examine how film teams are getting them out into the world. But first, we take a look at the creative practices that have supported impact.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

**“We realised that the biggest obstacle to the kind of transformative change the Green New Deal envisions is overcoming the skepticism that humanity could ever pull off something at this scale and speed. That’s the message we’ve been hearing from the “serious” center for four months straight: that it’s too big, too ambitious, that our Twitter-addled brains are incapable of it, and that we are destined to just watch walruses fall to their deaths on Netflix until it’s too late.”**

Naomi Klein





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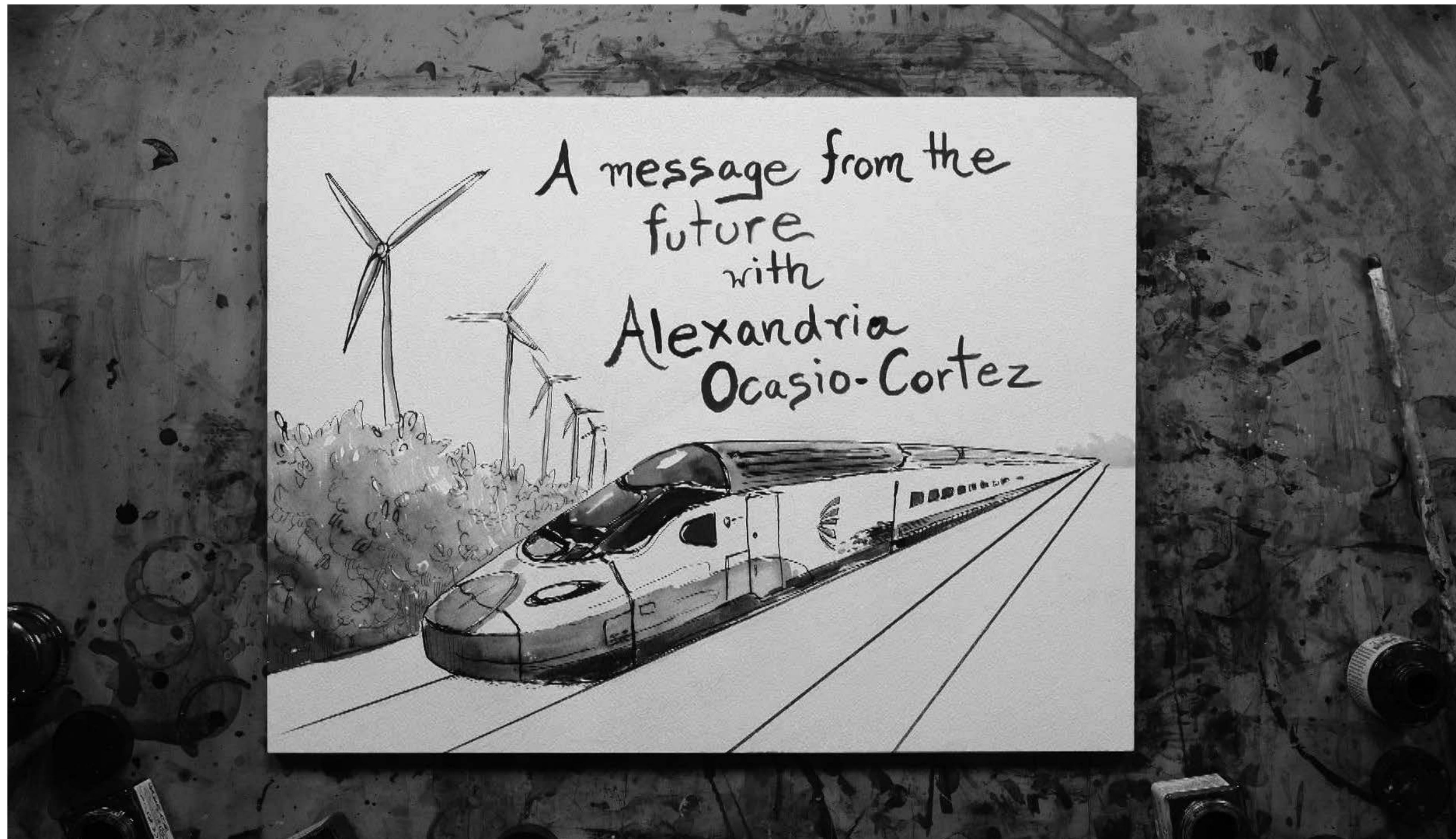
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Still from *A Message From the Future With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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**Do you want to geek out on this history of the short form films?**

*link.springer.com/  
chapter/10.1057/9781137484369\_2*  
This text, *Shorts and Film History: The Rise, Fall, and Rise of the Short Film* by Cynthia Felando, was written for you!

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**We also love this project from the IDFA Doc Lab, Moments of Innovation, on the emergence, re-emergence, and variety of shorts.**

*momentsofinnovation.mit.edu/shorts*



★ INTRODUCTION

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⚙️ IMPACT IN ACTION

📁 IMPACT DISTRIBUTION

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# THE FUNDAMENTALS

People arrive at making or working with shorts from a variety of places. Perhaps you are a seasoned shorts filmmaker, or this is your first go at the form. You may be someone who has come upon a story that you know is ideal as a short, or you may be a feature documentary filmmaker who has decided to make a short piece to precede the release of your longer film. You may have had a successful run with your feature length doc and realised audiences want to know more about a theme or a character in your film. Why not cut a piece that lets them dig in? Perhaps you've been commissioned to work with a journalist. Or you're a team member who is tasked with building an impact plan. Or an advocate who wants to integrate film into your public engagement.

No matter the pathway that led you to a short, or the shape it takes, let's take a moment to ground ourselves in two key characteristics of the form: style and length.

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**“We are lonesome animals. We spend all of our life trying to be less lonesome. One of our ancient methods is to tell a story begging the listener to say—and to feel—‘yes, that is the way it is, or at least that’s the way I feel it. You’re not as alone as you thought.’”**

John Steinbeck



### STYLE

Shorts — generally meaning anything 40 minutes and under — offer a great deal of creative flexibility to get their point across. They can include everything from: traditional story and character-driven documentary shorts to journalism (news and art-styled) to data-driven presentations (with infographics and data visualisation) to comedy films (sketches, routines, stunts) to evidence-based films (wrongdoing captured on camera) to straight-up advocacy films to interactive and VR projects to branded content and, of course, series (which can be any of the above). In this chapter we limit our examples to shorts projects and campaigns that explicitly aimed to advance some kind of social impact.

**Impact Shorts pack narrative punch.** *The Girl and the Picture*, by Vanessa Roth, tells the story of Madame Xia, who as a young girl witnessed the murder of her family in the Nanjing Massacre and lived to offer testimony. Now, at 88, she passes down her story to her granddaughter. But it’s a delicate process and there are those who wish to erase this history. Audiences walk alongside her as she fights to defend the truth.

**Impact shorts can make the news.** Journalist Carole Cadwalladr & The Guardian worked with Doc Society and director Mark Silver to produce the **documentary short** released alongside its Cambridge Analytica exposé, revealing the identity and motivation of whistleblower Christopher Wylie.

**Impact shorts can be character driven.** Take for example, the Oscar nominated *4.1 Miles* by Daphne Matziaraki. This 21-minute film about refugee arrivals in Europe is profoundly moving. The Syrian crisis was the biggest

news story of the year when the film came out, receiving endless coverage. However, *4.1 Miles* offered something unique: it presented the situation through the eyes of a powerful and compelling protagonist - a coast guard captain who lives on the Greek island of Lesbos. Through his seemingly endless efforts to rescue people, viewers are forced to confront the need for a humane solution.

**Impact shorts can communicate difficult ideas, elevate little known facts or unknown information in digestible ways.** Take the Brookings Institute, for example, which launched the **Brookings Creative Lab** in 2015 to tell the stories behind the research they produce, from understanding the elections to illustrating economic policy using infographics and interviews.

**Impact shorts can be emotionally compelling.** *Extremis* by Dan Krauss and *End Game* by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (both available on Netflix) both offer a compassionate and steady look at a subject that most people prefer to avoid: dying. The former follows a doctor, and the latter a series of families and palliative care teams as they move through sensitive conversations and decisions. In so doing, each film asks viewers to consider what it means - and what it will take - to die well.

**Impact shorts also tell the stories that are not being told.** *Venezuela: Smuggling Dreams* is about a father in Venezuela who swaps fishing for smuggling in a bid to provide for his family amid an economic crisis in Venezuela. It drives home the tough choices and dire risks that people take to provide for their families when there are few alternatives - and it tells the story from the perspective of someone who mainstream media

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might otherwise write off as “smuggler” or “criminal”, thus missing important layers of the story.

### **Impact shorts can offer surprising perspectives in non-traditional ways.**

***My Deadly, Beautiful City*** by Victoria Fiore is about Arctic Russia. It has no character and no story. It’s an 11 minute visual postcard from a specific place that is eye-opening with respect to the level of pollution one community experiences, and the surprising perspectives they hold.

Style you say? Shorts have got bags of it.

### **LENGTH**

Often, filmmakers want to know what the ideal length is for a short. And the short answer is (pun intended): it depends.

If you dare to investigate this question, you’ll get a range of responses. Marketers will tell you to keep your film to 30-60 seconds for Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. For YouTube it jumps to 2-9 minutes. But these numbers mainly have to do with the *stickiness* of a film and its likeliness to capture a viewer’s attention. But as we know, views do not necessarily denote impact.

Senior Short Film Programmer for the Sundance Film Festival, Mike Plante, **once said** that the average length of the shorts submitted to Sundance is 12 minutes and that anything over 15 minutes must be especially impressive for them to consider it. But the reasoning for this largely had to do with the festival’s programming needs (because it’s usually easier to pair a piece that is under 10 minutes before or after a feature). So that’s not necessarily the best determinant either.

A grassroots organiser may tell you that 30 minutes is better than 90 because this leaves them with ample time for discussion. When we’re talking about impact, discussion is good. But talk to some creatives and they may say something like: “It’s about telling the story the way the story wants to be told.” In other words, length may not be the best driver either.

The truth is, they are all kind of right. First and foremost, it really does depend on the story. If you can tell the story you want to tell in 10 minutes, then why make it 20?

And, in the end, it may come down to how you hope to get a short out there and how you want people to engage with it.

Just remember that the marketplace and distribution platforms change rapidly — yesterday’s sterling rules are tomorrow’s dust.

**“The major question I always get is *do you have a shorter version of this film?*”**

Alice Quinlan  
POV







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## IMPACT IN ACTION

Short-form films are no different from feature-length documentaries when it comes to planning for impact. But it's often the case that because shorts circulate well online, the impact dynamic that teams will focus on is 'changing minds' (e.g. awareness and reach). But each film has the potential for a different kind of impact, depending on the story, its strengths and the issue landscape it will fall within.

*Water Warriors*, for example, and *The Quipu Project*, which was about the forced sterilisations of primarily people of indigenous descent in Peru in the 1990s, were both used to build community (among other things). *Occupy Bakery* was used as a leadership development tool. The *A Conversation on Race* series was a valuable educational tool for the communities covered in each piece. Your team will still need to navigate most of the same questions and factors as a feature-length film, so circle back to chapters 1, 2, and 3 for a refresher.

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Here's a quick summary of the key questions you'll need to consider for your short film:

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### 1. What is your team's number one priority?

This is the most important question to tackle before you get started with your planning because what you focus on hereafter will depend on your answer. For example:

- We need to recoup our costs.
- We want this film to have an impact.
- We hope to build momentum towards a feature-length or a series.

*Orient your strategic planning around this priority. More guidance on this follows in the section below. But you can return to the prioritisation list in the first chapter to jog your thinking.*

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### 2. What's the Story Environment that you're dealing with and how can your film help?

- Is it a FRESH issue about which your film can help REVEAL important information?
- Is it a FAMILIAR issue that your film can help put the SPOTLIGHT on?
- Is it a HIDDEN issue that your film INVESTIGATES and exposes for the first time?
- Is it an ENTRENCHED issue that will benefit from a film that can HUMANISE it?

*As we discussed earlier in the guide - get clear on what's needed and where your film fits in, and build your impact plan around that.*

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### 3. Who are the key players or sectors working to solve the problems your film addresses?

*Once you've thought about the story environment and what role your film can play to help move the meter on the issue, it's time to think about who you need to partner with to help you. If you haven't already, do some research to find the stakeholders who work on the issues, or with the audiences you need to reach or engage. Find out if they can use your film to advance their efforts.*

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### 4. What is the core Impact Dynamic of your campaign going to be?

- Changing minds
- Changing behaviours
- Changing structures
- Building Communities

*Build your strategic plan around that. For example: if your goal is to use the film to change people's behaviours, will it be clear to them what they need to do after they're done watching? Will they need help figuring that out? If so, how will they get the help they need? If your goal is to change policy, how will you get the attention of the decision-makers who can help with that?*

When we look at campaigns around shorts that helped affect meaningful change, we notice a few common characteristics. Of course, not every short film that's had an impact has held each. But the markers of success we've seen relate to how targeted they are; the partners they work with; the way they work with the communities they cover; the use of event-based engagement; and how they work with other media. We explore each below and offer a few examples to illustrate.

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### FILMS WHICH HAVE A TARGET

Film teams that either know exactly what they want to do with a film, or what impact they hope to have, will have a better chance of accomplishing it because they can mobilise their resources towards those ends. Let's return back to two feature docs that have created materials fit for purpose for their target audiences.

***Thank You For the Rain*** by Julia Dahr and Kisilu Musya which was released as both a short and feature, was used by Emily Wanja and her impact team in Kenya to spread climate change awareness and advocacy, trigger discussions about sustainable farming and build community-driven solutions for agricultural resilience. In their outreach, they focused on hard to reach rural communities and created opportunities for community members to discuss directly with their leaders the loopholes in the existing programmes and climate change adaptation efforts in their regions. These discussions led to agreements on solutions in some communities (such as returning to drought resistant crops), the need for irrigation systems, water harvesting dams, economic empowerment solutions in times of drought, and more community-policymaker involvement in decision making. In fact, they are now working with a variety of stakeholders to construct a water harvesting earth dam that will serve over 200 households in Mutomo, an area greatly affected by climate change.

The feature and the short have turned out to be a powerful convening tool. The team is organising the first Communities Climate Resilience Convention (CCRC), held in conjunction with partner organisations, national and county governments, with *Thank You for the Rain*

as the centerpiece. Local organisations are using it in their ongoing climate change work to support advocacy and awareness. Fifty new farmers' groups have started working with the film's protagonist, Kisilu, on climate adaptation activities and have planted thousands of trees, alongside impact screenings in schools and select counties. Educator lesson plans for secondary schools are being developed for use by teachers in several subjects. And finally, the film has helped to raise Kisilu's and his community's profile by elevating his message, even as far as the UN Climate Conference in Bonn.

*American Promise* is another film created with a mission in mind: to engage parents and teachers in a broad effort to close the educational achievement gap for young black men. The campaign was multipronged, offering targeted resources for different audiences. For example, they created an app and a book to help parents better support their kids. They promoted Promise Clubs, to model and push for regular parents meetings to discuss challenges and solutions together. They created a resource for educators to help improve the classroom experience for students. The film team soon realised it would be beneficial to also have a short piece that appealed more directly to young people. So, they created *Behind Every Promise*, which aired on POV, and used it to foster youth-led dialogues and workshops on campuses and in conference, where they could give voice to their experiences and build power together.

Five years after the film's release and the filmmakers note that Promise Clubs continue to meet informally and strategically to address the specific needs of the schools their children attend. In addition to this sustained impact, the added benefit to the Rada Film Group has been that,



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Joe Brewster & Michèle Stephenson with their son Idris and his best friend and classmate Seun.

by creating a package that featured various versions and modules for targeted audiences, they were able to make a more attractive package for the educational market that had both greater longevity (it's still being used today) and generated greater returns (it's still being purchased by educational institutions today).

### PROJECTS WITH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are often one of the most valuable ways to leverage a short's strengths towards strategic ends. As with feature length films, they also tend to be a strong way to get a film out there, especially among target audiences. But the sometimes quicker turnaround time of short-form films can imply quicker decision-making and perhaps less time to build relationships and trust with important stakeholders. However, these relationships are often just as important in short-form film as they are in long-form.

***“As with long form documentary, relationships and partnerships are critical to the impact work. When thinking about impact for a short film, a filmmaker may have to be a bit more intentional about building these relationships earlier in the process. With a long-form documentary, intimate relationships and trust often form over a long period of time between the subjects and filmmakers, and with community and national organisations. A short-form project may not have this benefit, since their timelines do not always lend themselves to it. But these relationships can make or break a project.”***

—  
Sheila Leddy

Fledgling Fund and the Rapid Story Deployment Fund

Similarly, filmmakers Ilse and Femke van Velzen of IFProductions in the Netherlands created a series of 16 shorts based on a trilogy of films they had made related to sexual violence in the Congo: *Fighting The Silence*; *Justice For Sale*; and *Weapon Of War*. Their teams start every film project with a community-based workshop, which they call an “inception”, to ensure local partners and stakeholders have a say in the development of their productions. The filmmakers crafted the impact campaign, raised the money and coordinated the set-up of the project. Finally, the local partner Search for Common Ground (SCG), a long-standing international organisation focused on cooperative solutions to end conflict, was the organisation the would implement the campaign on the ground. SCG was important because they are trusted, have a strong network, and managed well in the Congo; they made it possible to get the series of shorts out to communities and the military during a time of war. SCG was also the only partner in the Congo that had the experience of traveling and organising community plays, which made them the best partner.

*Welcome to Shelbyville* by Kim Snyder is a film about a small town in Tennessee that is experiencing rapid demographic change. At a fine cut screening for funders, several wanted to know more about one of the film's central characters - Hawo, a Somali refugee and former nurse. This made sense: there were very few films at the time that enabled refugees from Muslim-majority countries to speak for themselves. So, in addition to deploying the full length film, the impact and engagement team at Active Voice created a 31-minute version called *Hawo's Dinner Party*, to give audiences an opportunity to go deeper into her story. The team launched the short film on the 10th Anniversary of the fall of the Twin Towers in NYC, and it quickly took on

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a life of its own. They equipped local and national leaders - from those working in local public libraries to those leading national networks like the International Rescue Committee, Welcoming America, and the YMCA - with a tool to break down stereotypes and build bridges between long-term residents and Muslim newcomers, locally and nationally. The Boise Police Department, for example, held a dialogue between police and Muslim residents; Puentes New Orleans used it to build bridges between the local Muslim and Latinx communities; and the Greeley Public Library in Colorado used the story to create space for youth newcomers to share their own stories with local residents. By the campaign's end, the film had been used in hundreds of screenings in 30 states, including seven cities with large Somali populations and at least seven cities that were grappling with heightened hostilities between Muslim newcomers and the receiving community.

Sometimes, a film's creation is intimately tied to the work of an organisation. For example, the Laundry Workers Center (LWC), which is featured in *Occupy Bakery*, found great value in the film as an organising tool for their work. Because it took years to make the film - time that the organisers featured in the film didn't have - the short became a core resource to inspire workers, show them what's possible, and continue building the movement they needed through the Center. In fact, use of the short (and even the trailer!) helped LWC inspire workers in several restaurants to launch labour campaigns and wage theft lawsuits, which were ultimately successful.

Be sure to return to [Section 3.9](#) for a refresher on strategic partnerships.

## FILM TEAMS WHO COLLABORATE WITH THE COMMUNITIES THEY SUPPORT

*Quipu: Calls for Justice*, the short film directed by Maria Ignacia Court & Rosemarie Lerner and produced by Sandra Tabares-Duque and the co-directors about the forcible sterilisation of indigenous women in Peru in the 1990s, premiered on the Guardian in 2017. "The groups of people we worked with told us: We've been trying to tell this story and nobody has heard us," said Sandra. So the project became a way to address that challenge. The documentary short is a part of The Quipu Project, which - as with the previous examples - is transmedia. It is comprised of a phone line that helps women across Peru who were forcibly sterilised by the government to share their stories with one another and with the rest of the world, an interactive website that presents viewers with these stories, and a campaign to pressure the government of Peru to recognise and allow the voices of these women to be heard.

One of the things that made The Quipu Project's design so effective is that it used a technology - analogue mobile phones - that was familiar to the indigenous women they intended to engage. Due to lack of access, illiteracy, and other communications challenges, some of the groups that were fighting for justice didn't realise that women in other communities had also been forcibly sterilised. So, the phone line became a way to connect these women to one another and help them build power together. The phone line was set up with options in both Spanish and Quechua, and the creative team made sure a consent protocol was built into the process. "We didn't want to create a project about them, but *with* them," said the team. The project helped successfully mobilise women



Still from *Occupy Bakery*

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Still from *She Called Me Red*

in actions that culminated in a march during the time leading up to the presidential elections in 2016. Today, these women are organised into a national organisation that supports and elevates their voices, and they use the media to continue to organise, mobilise for their rights, and build new leaders.

Another example is *She Called Me Red*, a short series that presents a Rohingya-led perspective on their mass exodus to Bangladesh following extreme violence in August 2017. It does so through the perspective of 27-year-old Yunus and his family. It was produced by SBS, the Australian public broadcaster which has a charter to provide content for all Australians including underrepresented communities. Recognising that the Rohingya people had been fleeing persecution in Myanmar, SBS green-lit development on the project utilising the technologies that have been crucial to the Rohingya and other recent waves of refugees: smartphones. They found that these are among the most precious possessions of people fleeing for their lives. Refugees use IM and social media to maintain fragile connections with the family members they've been separated from.

Kylie Boltin, commissioning editor for Online Documentaries at SBS, conceived of the series, which became the world's first live Instagram documentary and serialised over three weeks with daily content from both the Thangklai Rohingya refugee camp and Melbourne Australia. The project captures posts from Bangladesh, the challenges Yunus faces to gain asylum in Australia, the difficulties in finding work, the experiences of being a new diaspora community, and all the requirements of fulfilling and maintaining his status there. Daily live video 'stories' from the camp are coupled with daily posts:

photography, text and animation that add context about the experiences captured.

***“We released the content daily. Our intent was engagement and intimacy, not necessarily courting a viral hit. The project’s audience heard Yunus’s story over time, they learned he was the only member of his family to have reached Australia and continues to assist his family living in Thangkali Refugee Camp, Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh. The audience heard firsthand what it meant to have family living day-to-day in the Rohingya refugee camp - their daily struggles and sacrifices. Our audience was compassionate and thoughtful and there was a clear investment in Yunus and his family. We saw spikes of engagement when Yunus shared his personal struggles - with his family’s sickness, his search for a job; when he found a job. They empathised with him while he looked for a job and celebrated with him when he eventually found one. The combination of serialised storytelling and time facilitated a real investment from our audience.”***

Dr. Kylie Boltin  
SBS Australia

This not only redefined how Australia’s most popular social media platform can be used for long-term news reporting and multimedia storytelling, it also prioritised a distribution platform that the Rohingya were already engaging with. The documentary has since been nominated for two Walkley awards - Australia’s premiere journalism awards - in both the category of Innovation and also Feature/Photographic essay.

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### STRATEGIES WHICH INCLUDE EVENT-BASED ENGAGEMENT

So often when it comes to distributing shorts, people think mostly in terms of festivals and online platforms. But one of the most valuable ways for shorts to get seen and have an impact on the issues they address is through in-person or live engagement.

Organisers and other community leaders find value in using film to connect people to the issues they address, and to each other. But they often have a limited window of time to both screen a film and have the substantive conversations they want to have. So shorts become a valuable asset in these contexts.

*Collisions* is an example of a 17-minute Virtual Reality (VR) immersive documentary directed by Lynette Wallworth and produced by Nicole Newnham that was also used in the context of event-based engagement. It brings viewers into the world and story of a Martu tribe elder in the remote Western Australian desert, where in the 1950s he witnessed - pre-contact - an atomic test. The team wanted to use it in settings where they could shift discussions about destructive technologies to productive ends.

*Collisions* was the first VR work to receive commissioning funds from the World Economic Forum and was presented to world leaders at the 2016 Davos event. From there, it was invited to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty meetings at the UN in Vienna, and on to the UN General Assembly meeting in New York ahead of a vote to adopt a new resolution to ban nuclear weapons. It was also invited to the Timbie Forum on Arms Control at the

US State Department. As a result, many different heads of state and those contemplating legislation to contain nuclear weapons experienced the piece.

The team travelled to these and many other meetings carrying portable headsets. Importantly, at the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty** meeting in Vienna, says Wallworth: “We walked into a room with a sign outside the large doors that read ‘Closed Meeting of Eminent Persons Group’ and inside thirteen men - including Hans Blix, members for South Korea, China, Africa and other nations - sat in large swivel chairs discussing the nuclear safety of the world.” The men stopped their discussions to watch *Collisions*. The team found the intimacy of the form to be a huge benefit to their efforts. “It locked off viewing for VIPs whose attention is always being pulled in several directions,” said Wallworth. Affirming the value of the experience, Hans Blix explained that it was useful “because an atomic test is, to most people, simply an abstract concept.” The visceral nature of the experience made communicating the effects of the device potently real, even for those gathered to discuss the nuclear safety of the world.

These gatherings led to further invitations and to more presentations to key people in positions of power, including: the Washington Climate Summit 2016, where the team set up headsets in public viewing areas as well as in the green room so they could target particular speakers, and Parliament House Canberra, where *Collisions* was shown to parliamentarians the day before a vote in the House on the UN resolution. The piece added a layer of potent emotional impact to these discussions. Wallworth says, “My sense was that I was talking with people surrounded by layers and layers of paper, but no direct first-hand experience. And that’s where *Collisions*,



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as a first-hand account of a nuclear test, using an extremely immersive medium, proved so powerful.”

In one important encounter while presenting the work at the World Economic Forum China gathering, the grandson of the film’s protagonist began to explain to an Australian political bureaucrat his sense of the flawed nature of the consultation process that gained signatures of elders in the Martu community for an agreement to a uranium mine. As it turned out, this very person had written the White Paper for the Prime Minister and Cabinet on exactly this process, and was now hearing stories directly from the ground that could never have reached him otherwise. In another encounter in Vienna, a senior government official who would have sign-off on the proposed mine watched *Collisions* and entered into an hour-long discussion on revelations contained within the work.

In the end, the mine has not gone ahead, and Western Australia had a change of government that may mean it never will. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) passed on July 7, 2017. It is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination. We can’t know how much the piece and these series of private viewings and conversations influenced these decisions, but the team’s targeted and focused event-based efforts most certainly added to the pressure around these important decisions at a crucial moment. In recognition of this effect, Wallworth was named by Foreign Policy magazine as one of the year’s 100 leading global thinkers for “for immersing audiences in the destructive power of the nuke.”



Nyarri Nyarri Morgan  
in *Collisions*

## CAMPAIGNS WITH TRANSMEDIA CHARACTERISTICS

We’ve been really impressed by the transmedia characteristics of many of the campaigns we’ve already described. Like the [\*American Promise\*](#) campaign, which involved a feature-length, a short, a book, and an app; the Quipu project, which involved a short, a phone line, and an online interactive story-based website; or the [\*Shelbyville Multimedia\*](#) project, with [\*a series\*](#) of 2-5 minute pieces on each of the protagonists in the film, two 30-minute shorts, and a cookbook.

Some of our favorite transmedia characteristics around a film impact campaign were uncomplicated. They simply offered a way for an audience member to engage more deeply with the film by connecting it to other media or materials. For example, *The Bible Tells Me So* team worked with the Human Rights Campaign to create [\*this\*](#) Bible-based advocacy curriculum. Another project, [\*ONWARD\*](#) by Active Voice Lab for Sojourners, also incorporates Bible study questions into the platform for each film featured. The Presbyterian Church USA put out *Locked in a Box* and an [\*accompanying Bible-focused study guide\*](#), which has been an effective organising tool for its justice work around immigrant detention.

[\*Immigrant Nation\*](#) was an interactive storytelling project designed to document the United States’ diverse immigrant narratives and experiences and share them with the world. It used a few central shorts, [\*The Caretaker\*](#) and [\*The Mayor\*](#) to inspire visitors to share their own stories online and in the context of a traveling exhibit that featured photographs, a timeline, and a story collection booth. Live events created opportunities for audiences to share a short anecdote relating to their

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personal immigrant story, either online, or on custom-designed postcards, and then the stories were collected and illustrated on a live mural. Audiences were able to see their personal story added to a live art piece in real time, and by the end of the live event, the communities' collective story was represented on the finished mural, often more than 12 feet wide. Altogether, these shorts led to more than 1000 contributions — powerful stories of immigration that were created and shared by users of the online storytelling platform.

The 9.70 team in Colombia used YouTube videos to respond to a mainstream media blackout and to defend their work against a government misinformation campaign. Filmmaker Victoria Solano became a YouTuber, regularly posting video responses to the film's following and asking fans to tweet and share the videos broadly to spread the word about the legislation. See [here](#), and [here](#). In this way, the short YouTube videos and their film worked hand in hand to inform, educate and support farmers in their effort to defend against an illegitimate law and push back against the authorities who were determined to discredit the filmmakers.

We hope these examples have inspired — now it's time to talk about the ins and outs of getting your film funded and distributed.



Victoria Solano



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*Collisions VR project*



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## Further reading

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**Are you interested in VR? Efforts are under way to make VR more accessible to audiences and more economical for producers**

*[www.immerse.news](http://www.immerse.news)*

We recommend keeping up on the trends by subscribing to Immerse, a publication focused on immersive technologies, their sustainability, equity, and trends.



★ INTRODUCTION

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⚙️ IMPACT IN ACTION

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🎥 MAKING & MOVING SHORTS

📊 MEASURING IMPACT

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## FUNDING FOR SHORTS

**W**hile there is renewed interest in doc shorts, this is happening within the context of a media ecosystem that is failing to support even a majority of independent filmmakers at feature length. The question of funding and distribution for shorts is definitely still a moving target.

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Many shorts filmmakers get started on their projects without any funding at all, or without enough funding to cover costs. Sometimes funders will give smaller grants for shorter films. The perception is that, because it's short, it needs less. While it's true you may not need a whole year to edit a shorter piece, it nonetheless often takes the same amount of time to build the relationships and capture the footage needed.

Alice Quinlan of POV underscored this point:

***“One of the lessons of the last year: it takes just as much time to produce a high quality resource (i.e. discussion guide or lesson plan) for a short as it does for a feature.”*** So, even though there may

be areas where a filmmaker can cut costs with a short, it's important not to underestimate the areas where the costs will remain the same.

Filmmaker Michael Premo puts it more forcefully still;

***“If we're trying to uphold values of equity and justice, we need to structure fundraising in equitable ways (i.e. not in the mold of product-driven consumer capitalism). We need financing models that support development/testing/iteration. If we are committed to***

***“impact,” we as a global community of practice need to embrace the complex nature of change, which also applies to the complex nature of how people, scenarios and stories evolve over the course of filming.”***

While it's not a solution to funding challenges for shorts for shorts' sake, some filmmakers find value in using their shorts as proof of concepts for features and series they want to make. 76% of shorts filmmakers who were surveyed in one study said that the most important thing for them in making a short was to open up career opportunities. A feature film can be a big financial commitment, so being able to see and try out the possibilities first can help get a feature off the ground.

But many of the filmmakers we spoke to were worried about the business model for non-branded short form work and how sustainable it really is. And the data seems to support this anxiety. In 2018, the Short of the Week Filmmaker Survey found that the average short filmmaker spends about \$12,500 out of pocket on a film and \$34,000 when you factor in hidden costs.

Some filmmakers might receive money from film festivals in awards. But there are costs involved at the front end that limit this as an income stream. The 2018 Short of the Week Filmmaker Survey found, for example, that filmmakers on average spent \$1537 on film festival submissions alone (51 submissions on average).

There is some foundation funding available for production. Fledgling formed the Rapid Story Deployment Fund because they felt there was a role for rapid response short-form content. And while obviously budgets can vary depending on the short, they notice

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budgets do tend to be smaller, and a relatively small grant can play a key role in a film project. Meanwhile Tribeca has started IF/Then Shorts, a new filmmaking initiative that awards monetary grants and provides year-round distribution mentorship to filmmakers creating short documentaries. And Doc Society — realising the value that short pieces could offer to organising efforts in the U.S. - launched [Good Pitch Local](#). This integrates short-form film into regional efforts to address issues that are vital to local communities.

National film bodies have a mixed record on shorts, though in the UK things are looking brighter. The British Council [Shorts Support Scheme](#) funds the travel of UK-based short filmmakers to 48 major film festivals, correcting for festivals with policies wherein the travel and accommodation for short filmmakers are not covered. And the British Film Institute, recognising that shorts are an essential part of a talent ladder for emerging filmmakers, has put a renewed focus on them following the disappearance of slots on broadcast television for the form.

We have seen NGO's might fund a single or series of shorts. Look at the [Trans In America](#) documentary series by Daresha Kyi, Cary Cronenwett, Lindsey Dryden and Shaleece Haas that was presented by the ACLU and Little By Little Films. It offers compelling portraits of three impressive people and families who have experienced discrimination, and deepens viewers' understanding of its impact on their lives.

Sometimes a corporate sponsor will get behind a film. Ben Knight's film *Denali*, which chronicles the relationship between photographer Ben Moon and his dog Denali as

Moon battles cancer, was sponsored by Patagonia. But this kind of arrangement is relatively rare.

In some cases shorts can fall into the advertising-supported streaming model and - if the film does not get buried - filmmakers can make some money back that way. There are platforms that will buy the rights to exclusively stream a film indefinitely or for a period. And sometimes a platform or other distributor will commission a short film directly, especially journalistic outlets, and pay the costs for it outright. Examples of these are POV, Field of Vision, Topic, Quibi, Concordia, Great Big Story and The Guardian - all of whom have been known to provide funding to one extent or another.

*Transgender, at War and in Love* was commissioned by the *New York Times* Op-Docs series. Filmmaker Fiona Dawson had started documenting the stories of transgender service members who were still banned following the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." At the time, transgender issues were beginning to get attention in the news and *The New York Times* was interested in including U.S. troops in their coverage. So, they brought Fiona on and teamed her up with director Gabriel Silverman and producer Jamie Coughlin to put the film together in just a few weeks (you can read more about this in the case study in the following section).

This was also the case for *Occupy Bakery*, the short by Rachel Lears. She and her partner Robin Blotnick met the *New York Times* at a Good Pitch event and received a small budget to feature it in the Op-Docs series. The film went viral within the labour and law community that week, and labour lawyers who they didn't know started to get in touch. In this way the short helped them build



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awareness of the film among their core audience, an important contribution to impact.

Despite the challenges to date, more and more funders who have traditionally funded features are taking a greater interest in shorts due to this perception that they can not only be more economical but can also come out sooner and therefore have accelerated impact. Which is good but leaves us with one last thing to reflect on.

### WHO IS PAYING, WHO IS IN CONTROL?

We shouldn't just interrogate equitable compensation for filmmakers for producing shorts, but also consider the question of who has control of the film. An issue about which filmmakers and their partners need to be really clear.

This is true for all filmmaking but particularly heightened with shorts where the budgets are smaller, there are likely less funders involved and more opportunity to capture control of the project.

Over the years we have seen three main models emerge:

1. The filmmaker owns and controls the film and collaborates on impact plans with partners
2. The partners own and control the film which the filmmaker delivers
3. The filmmaker and partners collaborate and share control and ownership

It is possible to make great creative work and have impact with all three of these models. But in any of these scenarios, you must have a shared vision and

understanding of the goals of the project, and to have discussed what the process will be around editorial control, impact strategy and how you will resolve any disagreements.

It might be worth looking back at [Active Voices 'Prenups'](#) to help set a relationship framework.

### GEEK OUT IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

### IMPACT DISTRIBUTION

*“Even filmmakers with good connections, relationships and experiences can have difficulty securing distribution for their shorts. At Fledgling, we worry about that,”* says Sheila Leddy, who helped launch Fledgling Fund's Rapid Story Deployment Fund. *“As its name implies, our fund emphasises rapid deployment. We want to know that the film team has a plan for how the story is going to reach audiences.”*

Sound familiar? For us, too! Distribution is often the biggest question when it comes to shorts for impact. So what is a film team to do?

**“Get a deal with an established and respected outlet and use it to build momentum towards your next moment.”** This can work very well for those filmmakers who are able to secure such a deal or have been commissioned by a news outlet. But there are far fewer established outlets than there are talented filmmakers. In addition, getting such a deal does not guarantee impact.



**“When I embarked upon *Water Warriors* — my road map until then had been feature films — I had no idea what the rules were, it just felt like everyone has different policies on shorts and there didn't appear to be any standard.”**

Michael Premo



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**“Premiere your film where you’ll gain the attention of your target audience, and use it to build momentum towards your next moment.”** Sometimes distribution of a short can look fairly traditional, with a run at film festivals, a premiere (usually online), and community outreach and engagement. This can also work well IF your team is actively involved in maintaining the momentum.

**“Get your film out there, in as many places as you can, all at once.”** This strategy aims to build a cascade of attention by getting it out far and wide. This too can work well, especially when bolstered by strong online and offline partnerships. But there may be drawbacks with a few film festivals with exclusivity clauses. Depending on how you go about it, it may also mean giving the film away for free.

### GEEK OUT IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

These are by no means the only short form distribution models. Sometimes it’s a combination of the above. Sometimes it’s none of the above. For example, it’s common for a short that is adapted from a feature length film to have its distribution intimately tied to the community outreach and engagement planning of the feature campaign. (Beware: sometimes it can also get lost in the campaign.)

The truth is, the right fit for your film will take into account your impact strategy (including target audiences and engagement needs), your economic and other priorities, and the distribution pathways that are open to you. There will be opportunities. There will be trade-offs.

So develop a plan, make sure your partners and funders understand it, stay nimble, and keep your eye on impact.

## FILM FESTIVALS

Film festivals are one of the main ways that shorts get seen. They can generate industry buzz around a projects, and filmmakers often use them to gain the attention of potential funders and engagement partners for their distribution or impact campaigns. There are so many fantastic festivals with shorts programmes, we are deferring to the following list by the good folks at Short For The Week which was accurate at the time of publishing in early 2019.

### GEEK OUT IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

But people who’ve *been there, done that* warn that spending too much time and money on festivals may not balance out in the end. The most important note is to submit to festivals you plan to attend in person. And know that if you want to draw specific target audiences to festival screenings, you’ll have to put in the work to get them there. Also keep in mind that you’re likely to have a very limited amount of time for discussion. And you may be sharing the spotlight with other short films that may or may not have anything to do with your film or impact campaign. So plan wisely. Otherwise you may find the costs outweigh the benefits.

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### ONLINE

There are many platforms to consider. From [Nowness](#) to [Dazed](#), [AJ Shorts](#) to [Vice](#), [Omeleto](#) to [CBC Short Docs](#) and online premieres are certainly worth exploring. Especially if the prospective digital rights-holder will work to guarantee viewership. Or if they would allot a marketing budget to the project? If not, you may want to evaluate the terms against other non-exclusive options and prospective reach - especially if your priority is reaching a specific audience, which you can better guarantee on your own.

Also ask, will you be allowed to screen the film with partners or at other in-person events? And don't forget to ask about derivative rights too; will they be included? Because if your priority is to leverage your short towards a series or a longer film, make sure you're discussing those terms up front.

Take Vimeo's premium initiative, [Staff Pick Premieres](#), as an example. It guarantees over 100,000 views on the site and other benefits (e.g. placement, editorial and social media promotion) to filmmakers who they select and who agree to premiere their films on Vimeo. However, participants must agree to upload their work directly through their Vimeo accounts for one year, with the first 30 days being exclusive to Vimeo (a Vimeo-embedded link on other sites is fine though, as well as in-person events, festivals, television deals, and even SVOD). It's free to submit as long as you've screened at an Oscar-qualifying festival - however, they don't pay a licensing fee.

Which will be more valuable: an exclusive film festival premiere or an online platform that garners views from an

important and select few, or the possibility of thousands of views in many spaces? Only your team knows. But the main lesson here is: ask lots of questions, weigh your options, and don't be afraid to ask for what you need. Because the space is still taking shape, most distributors are fairly flexible... especially if your reasons for doing what you want to do are aimed at social change.

And if you are self-distributing online, Jeffrey Bowers and Ina Pira, curators at Vimeo, suggest doing everything you can to set your film up to be discovered.

### What simple things, you ask?

- Make sure the audience you hope to reach is digitally connected and then be sure to feature your short in the spaces where they are likely to be.
- Thumbnails and a good logline are important.
- Subtitles, so your film is accessible to people who need them, can push your film up above the fray - and be sure to let people know you've done so in your logline.
- Connect your video to all your social media channels: make it really easy for people to help you.
- Create a plan to get your film up and out on as many platforms and spaces as you can.
- In terms of best practices for releasing a film online, that first week is crucial - the number of views a film will get that first week is probably the highest it will see, so make sure you give it your all.
- Reach out to press and your partner organisations.

Take *This is a Coup* for example. Field of Vision and Doc Society (formerly known as BRITDOC) partnered with Paul Mason's Kallithea Films for this series about the 2015 Greek debt crisis. Their goal was to use the series



**“Filmmakers are so good at doing crowdfunding to get their films made. But for some reason, they're not so good at reaching out to everyone to “like” their film or spread the word about it. Remember: it's the simple things that make a difference.”**

Jeffrey Bowers  
Senior Curator at Vimeo

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to engage new democratic left-wing movements across key territories (Greece, Spain, UK, the US, Germany) and reinvigorate conversations around the Jubilee Campaign for debt relief. Their strategy required a robust online release.

The team had a robust plan that involved: press outreach in four languages; influencer screenings and thought leader engagement; outreach to over 200 influencers that was guided by influencer mapping; developing dozens of gifts and other assets; and a social calendar to coordinate their activities, among other things. Their press strategy also involved social mapping to identify press targets based on the media that their target audiences consumed, allowing the film team to prioritise media engagement to the audiences that would be most receptive to the episodes. This in turn amplified the reach to those most likely to share the films through social media. The team exceeded their online targets with over 486k views of 50% or more of the episodes and over 10 million impressions on Twitter.

Then, wherever it is that you gain momentum, use it as a springboard to build even more momentum. Filmmakers like Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick leveraged their short, *Occupy Bakery*, to build buzz for the feature among their core audiences in the labour and immigrant rights communities. They were able to keep this going with Upworthy, where the trailer was posted later in 2013, and through press and strategic outreach around several key festival screenings in 2014 (such as Full Frame, AFI Docs and DOC NYC). They also laid the groundwork for a successful Kickstarter in 2015, which funded a limited theatrical release and national grassroots screening tour.

**“You can’t just wait for things to just go viral. You have to have a strategy to get it in front of the audiences you want to reach.”**

Rachel Lears



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### VOD

Netflix, for example, features selections from The New York Shorts International Film Festival. Amazon's Prime Video Direct program holds over 100 short films in its offering, which have been culled from popular film festivals like Tribeca or publishers like Tastemade, Machinima and CollegeHumor. AMC Digital collaborates with Sundance. Fandor is yet another, which offers a short film channel featuring films - all mostly under 5 minutes long - that have been pulled from well-established film festivals. We expect to see more of these collaborations in the years to come.

On-Demand deals, including AVOD, can be a great way to make some money back on a production or campaign. But again: read the agreements carefully for exclusivity clauses that limit your ability to release during certain windows or spaces. If you decide to sign one, be sure you've weighed the reasons why.

And be sure your impact campaign's target audiences will be able to afford to get past the paywall. If not, it may be a good idea to create a discount code for them so that everyone you need to see this film can see it.

### TELEVISION & THEATRICAL

Getting a short film featured on broadcast channels can really raise the profile with mainstream audiences. It's a chance to focus outreach and engagement, to generate buzz and conversation online, and around which to get press attention. This can be valuable for film campaigns that are aimed at raising awareness, exposing new information, or educating the public about an issue.

But - shorts have a mixed fortune on TV. Strands have come and gone but one notable example is Al Jazeera's Witness, which is available online and on TV and has the advantage of global reach. There are new players like ShortsTV, an HD TV channel dedicated to short movies that is available around the world. We are also seeing an increase in new series that feature shorts exclusively. The Short Form Film Festival, for example, is a TV program that showcases shorts for 14 million British households and is soon to reach markets in Asia and Australia.

POV has now thrown its hat into the ring with POV Shorts, a Public Broadcast TV series in the U.S. that premiered in late 2018. *"The goal is to fill a need for shorts to be celebrated and amplified and have a home as a part of our cannon and legacy,"* says Alice Quinlan. *"We see shorts as part of a vanguard of adventurous and interesting and fun pieces that need to be showcased better."*

And then there's theatrical. Did that make you blink twice? Well, it's true. While it's still limited, there is increasing opportunity for shorts in theatres in non-festival settings. Neon **announced** it would be pairing short films with all of its theatrical releases, And the **word on the street** is that one other distributor is making similar moves. This may still be a fledgling trend, but we're keeping our eyes on it.

As you can see, there are plenty of ways to get your film out there and there is no one-size-fits-all strategy. Signing a deal or signing no deal; focusing your energies online or focusing them off-line... it all depends on priorities and your impact dynamics, as we discussed at the start of this chapter.

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But even when you do manage to secure distribution, you still need to think hard about how you need this audience to engage with the content.

Unless your impact dynamic is changing minds (and even if it is changing minds) you need to create some scaffolding to move your audience up the ladder of engagement. In other words, they've experienced your film and have been moved and have learned from it. Now what? Be sure your plan includes a way to direct your audiences after they've viewed the film.

Now it's time to explore a unique kind of partnership that we've already touched on but that deserves a deeper look because it's increasingly common with shorts: journalistic partnerships.

**“Today, the short film not only survives but, given the proliferation of screening platforms especially favorable to the form, the balance soon may tip in its favor, if it hasn't already.”**

Cynthia Felando  
Discovering Short Films





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Still from *Water Warriors*  
documentary



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## Further reading

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#### WHO IS PAYING, WHO IS IN CONTROL?

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##### **Make it rain: a new chance for short documentaries?**

[bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/new-chance-short-documentaries](https://bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/new-chance-short-documentaries)

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##### **Food for thought**

[cjr.org/watchdog/media-capture.php](https://cjr.org/watchdog/media-capture.php)

This article from CRJ explores how political parties and corporations work in tandem to subtly or boldly pressure media to produce favorable coverage.

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#### IMPACT DISTRIBUTION

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##### **Curious about this latter strategy?**

[shortoftheweek.com/news/be-everywhere-all-at-once/?utm\\_source=Email+Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=60f2184836-MAILCHIMP\\_WEEKLY\\_NEWLETTER&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bf235fe23b-60f2184836-92937693](https://shortoftheweek.com/news/be-everywhere-all-at-once/?utm_source=Email+Subscribers&utm_campaign=60f2184836-MAILCHIMP_WEEKLY_NEWLETTER&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bf235fe23b-60f2184836-92937693)

Check out this handy explainer by Andrew S Allen and team: Be Everywhere All At Once: The Ultimate Guide to Festivals, Online, and Your Short Film Release for more information about distribution trends for short form filmmakers today. Its based on interviews and a survey of hundreds of successful filmmakers to understand what works and what doesn't when releasing a film today.

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#### FILM FESTIVALS

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##### **Check out this handy Essential List of Festivals and Online Eligibility, created by the good folks at the Short of the Week:**

[shortoftheweek.com/news/list-of-festivals-and-online-eligibility/](https://shortoftheweek.com/news/list-of-festivals-and-online-eligibility/)





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## JOURNALISTIC PARTNERSHIPS

Everyday it seems a new and powerful documentary filmmaker-journalism partnership emerges. Filmmakers and journalists collaborating on projects. Digital news platforms adding on a short film section, some of which is made in-house, some commissioned externally. From **The Economist** to **The Nation**, **The Guardian** to **The New York Times**.



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Not only do some journalists find value in telling their stories in film as well as in print, but some are thinking about impact (look no further than the solutions journalism trend) and, at this moment when trust is low, building direct relationships with audiences is a way that journalists are attempting to restore confidence.

Many news teams are incorporating community engagement and evaluative learning/self reflection into their models. In fact, many assert that the survival and relevance of the news industry largely depends on newsrooms' ability to build meaningful relationships with the people they serve.

Some newsrooms are also getting more explicit about impact - even as they avoid advocacy. The CNN agency, for example, has an impact page where a reader can “get involved” or “donate” to an organisation or effort. The Marshall Project is another example. It is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organisation that focuses explicitly on the U.S. criminal justice system and has the explicit aim of educating and enlarging the audience of people who care about the state of criminal justice in the U.S.

## CREATIVE CONSEQUENCES

These growing intersections do demand that documentary filmmakers abide by journalistic standards and this is new territory for some. For example, in journalistic partnerships, impeccable standards of accuracy and fairness becomes essential and filmmakers may not be able to lean on poetic license quite as much.

There are hundreds of codes of conduct, charters and statements made by media and professional groups outlining the principles, values and obligations of the craft of journalism. Most focus on five common themes:

### 1. Truth and Accuracy

Journalists cannot always guarantee ‘truth’, but getting the facts right is the cardinal principle of journalism. We should always strive for accuracy, give all the relevant facts we have and ensure that they have been checked. When we cannot corroborate information we should say so.

### 2. Independence

Journalists must be independent voices; we should not act, formally or informally, on behalf of special interests whether political, corporate or cultural. We should declare to our editors - or the audience - any of our political affiliations, financial arrangements or other personal information that might constitute a conflict of interest.

### 3. Fairness and Impartiality

Most stories have at least two sides. While there is no obligation to present every side in every piece, stories should be balanced and add context. Objectivity is not always possible, and may not always be desirable (in the face for example of brutality or inhumanity), but impartial reporting builds trust and confidence.

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### 4. Humanity

Journalists should do no harm. What we publish or broadcast may be hurtful, but we should be aware of the impact of our words and images on the lives of others.

### 5. Accountability

A sure sign of professionalism and responsible journalism is the ability to hold ourselves accountable. When we commit errors we must correct them and our expressions of regret must be sincere not cynical. We listen to the concerns of our audience. We may not change what readers write or say but we will always provide remedies when we are unfair.

To find out more, the [AccountableJournalism.org](https://AccountableJournalism.org) website has been developed as a resource to on global media ethics and regulation systems, and provides advice on ethical reporting and dealing with hate speech.

The quicker turnaround time for some shorts (when compared to some features that can take years) can also mean a need for increased sensitivity on a few fronts related to impact, ethics and accountability. It can mean you have less time to build relationships and trust with communities and important stakeholders. Transparency and clear communication become essential and it's a good idea to prepare the film subjects up-front about your distribution plans.

You'll also have less time to vet your impact goals, solutions, and representations with impacted communities and key stakeholders who understand the problems and needs. But feedback and input from key stakeholders can make or break a campaign.

Sometimes it means getting a story out before there's been a lot of time to reflect on the risks. Sometimes that's a necessary risk, but it should be a calculated one. So, take a moment to consider the possibilities.

When the stakes are high for journalists, they are high for filmmakers too. If you have not already downloaded [Safe and Secure](https://SafeandSecure.film), we recommend you do so now: [SafeandSecure.film](https://SafeandSecure.film). Also, have a look at the library of resources available at Witness: [www.library.witness.org](https://www.library.witness.org). Both can help orient you to the issues and questions of relevance to your safety as an impact-oriented film team.





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## TAKE AN EVALUATIVE APPROACH

Film teams that take an evaluative approach to their projects gather information and feedback as they go so they can learn and improve their approach. So, the film or components of the project, or objectives, or design will necessarily shift as they proceed. In this way, evaluation is not necessarily simply about tracking outcomes — it's about learning.

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The *Water Warriors* team took an evaluative approach to their campaign. To track impact, they systematically collected responses to two key questions from each of their screening partners:

**Why did you show this film?**

[tracking intent/objectives]

**What about it was useful?**

[film strengths and outcomes]

They used the responses to track the intent (objectives) of screening hosts and understand what strengths they saw in the film. They also used the exhibit to test their assumptions and gather feedback on their messaging with various communities.

This iterative process allowed them to learn and make sure they were on the right track. They could ensure communities felt they were being represented the way they wanted to be — a participatory approach that was important to the team. It was through this process, for example, that they learned that the communities they captured on film wanted the intensity of being in a direct action blockade to come through.

Through the process, the project evolved, eventually becoming an effective way to provide a platform for local groups and allowing them to broaden the reach of their work to new residents with whom the organisers had not yet connected.

We'll discuss evaluative approaches more in [Chapter 6](#). But for now we leave you with this: it may be important to distinguish the differential impacts of various parts of a campaign so you can appropriately make changes as you proceed to maximise your project's impact potential.

**TRACKING CONFUSION**

Because some shorts' impact campaigns tend to be transmedia, the question of how to account for a short's unique contribution to change can also become more challenging. In other words, when a short is connected to a larger campaign with other media and story-based components, what are you measuring the impact of: the short, or the campaign?

Take *Chasing Coral* as an example. A shorter, 4-minute version of the feature length film that was hosted on Upworthy was viewed nearly 900k times. Released in the days leading up to COP23, it offered a burst of energy around climate negotiations taking place and an urgent reminder of what's at stake. In addition, it featured the full, time-lapse footage revealed toward the end of the feature-length film, making this powerful visual evidence of climate change available for organisations and everyday citizens to use as an awareness-raising tool. These were distinct contributions from the role that the feature length played in other moments of the campaign and film's life. Screening hosts also shared short films before the film as a way to connect the film's global story to local issues – advocacy organisations shared locally produced shorts touching on their campaign priorities and businesses shared short films showcasing their commitment to sustainability. In settings like these, the shorter films played a role in helping audiences make a

*Chasing Coral*

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connection. They worked in concert with *Chasing Coral*. But their contributions were distinct.

Being attentive to the different ways that different project components contribute to change matters less if you don't plan to make changes and/or you simply want to understand the overarching response to your project. So, be clear what it is you're evaluating and why, and build your evaluation plan around your needs.

**MEASUREMENT MISMATCH**

So often, because a short is so easily distributed online, the data for online/digital reach becomes easy to collect. But this data — while important — is sometimes a mismatch for the primary impact dynamic of a project. In other words, in some projects for which the primary impact dynamic is to change minds and raise awareness, measuring reach, digital engagement and interaction can be valuable indicators of impact. But if the primary impact dynamic is to build communities and foster new relationships, then the quality and sustainability of interaction and engagement will become more important. If the primary impact dynamic is policy change, then reach only matters in so far as you can show the connection between your audience and the pressure they placed on policymakers by way of the short.

The film *Virunga* was an exposé that shed new light on the activities of Soco International, a British oil company that was putting the Virunga National Park and local communities at risk through its oil exploration. Because the team aimed to use the story to build public understanding about the importance of the park as a source of peace and prosperity for the region and the

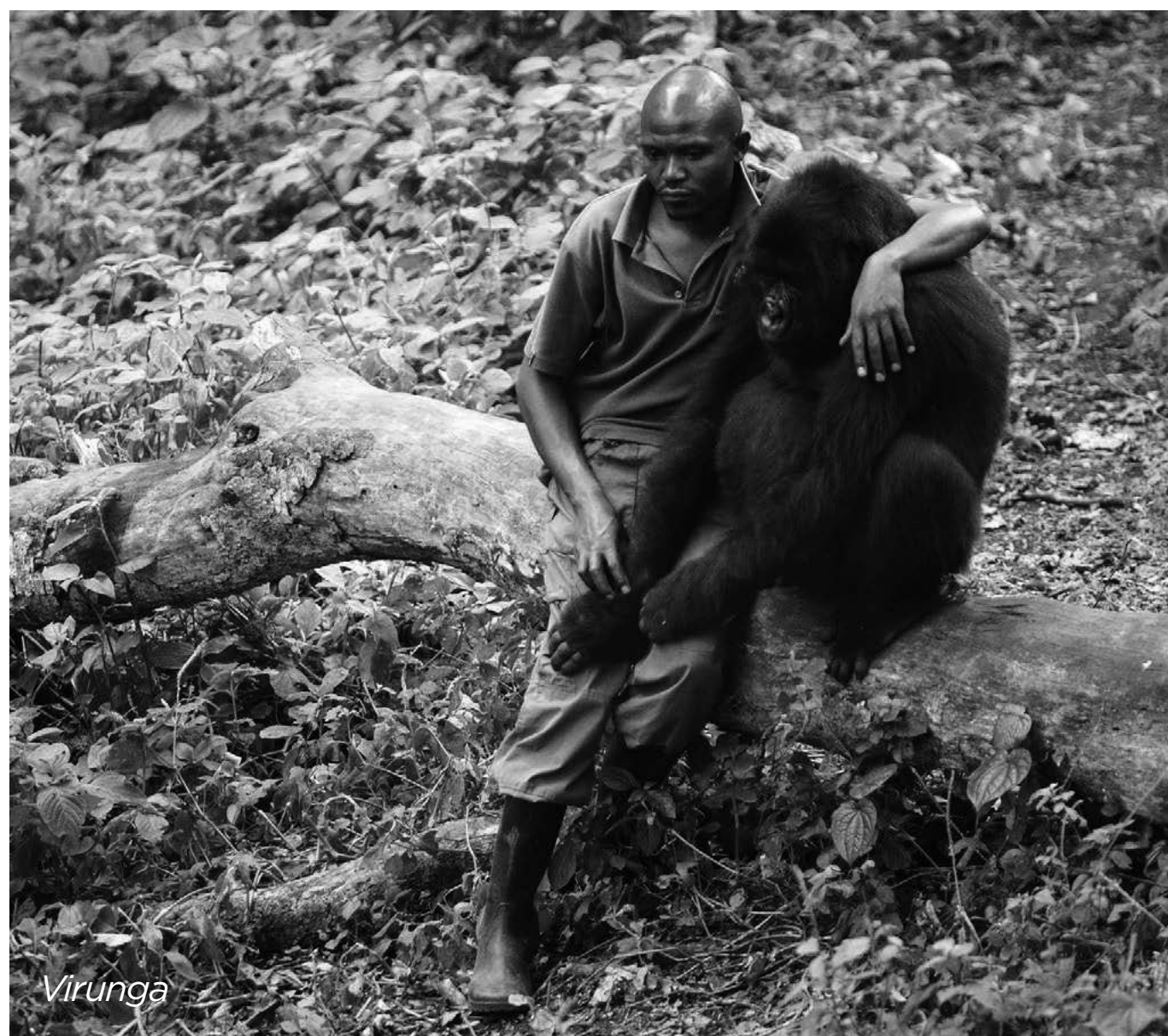
existential threats it faced, wide viewership was key. Therefore, those numbers mattered a great deal in that context. But the team also produced a series of shorts, referred to as *Virunga Yetu*. This series had a different focus: to engage local villagers and increase their desire to protect or support the park, and to shift their value for sustainable development over extraction. As such, online views matter little in this context where the target audience does not have access — and even if it did, what mattered most was the quality of the reaction.

**HUMBLING IMPACT**

It's also just as valuable to know the limitations of what you can say about impact. Take as another example the films that IFProductions created on sexual violence in the Congo.

Despite the fact that the team was able to reach 2 million people in the Congo (or more, they stopped tracking the numbers) with their film *Fighting the Silence* through their traveling Mobile Cinema project, the filmmakers were reluctant to say too much about the impact of their work on the issue. That's because the local organisations that use their films (and that received special training on how to moderate conversations, using guides developed to help them) intentionally engaged audiences multiple times with various pieces.

*“Besides our films and workshops, there has been so much activity in the Congo around this specific issue from different organisations that it is impossible to trace which activities did what,”* says Ilse van Velzen. *“What we did see however is the ‘power of film’ and what impact it leaves. It starts dialogues and breaks through taboos. People who would normally not talk about their own*



*Virunga*



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*experience were able to do so by referring to the people they saw in the film, rather than themselves.”*

Impact, she stresses, is also about ensuring they do no harm and that the process from beginning to end is done with accountability and safety in mind. So, that meant engaging with local communities in the filmmaking process (as described earlier in this [Chapter in 5.3](#)). And it meant making sure to follow up with organisations, social workers and aid workers linked to the screenings, to have safety nets in place for audiences after screenings to provide trauma and other support as needed.

Having said that, Ilse stresses the vital importance of conducting a proper evaluation.

**“Sometimes it’s hard to get evaluation into budgets, but you have to fight for it. Because that’s where you can truly understand what happened, and in so doing, your work and the field at large can learn and grow.”**

Ilse & Femke Van Velzen



**“It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end.”**

Ursula K. Le Guin





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## CASE STUDIES

In the **library** there are numerous impact case studies for long form documentary films which have deployed shorts, interactive or VR projects as part of their impact strategy. But in this section we are previewing case studies for films which were made as shorts with dedicated strategic impact strategies. See what you think.

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Other Case Studies:

[\*The Quipu Project\*](#)

[\*Transgender, at War and in Love\*](#)

[\*Water Warriors\*](#)

## ***The Quipu Project:*** Elevating Voices

**The objective of the Quipu Project was first and foremost to engage, connect, and mobilise women in communities across Peru who had been forcibly sterilised to share their stories.** In so doing, the Quipu team aimed to amplify their testimonies for an international audience, which they hoped would in turn help them pressure the Peruvian state to act on the issue and also lead to greater support for these women, including among urban elites in Peru who often do not recognise the discriminatory nature of these policies.

Given the repressive nature of the Peruvian state, and the sensitive nature of the women’s experiences and stories, the Quipu team took precautions to protect the privacy and ensure the consent of the women who participated in the project. At the same time, they also made creative choices to ensure the rich and powerful character of their testimonies would be preserved, from using subtitles rather than dubbing over their voices, to centring their testimonies online and presenting them over moving images of the villages and environments they reside in, so that no voice was decontextualised. The result is a series of powerful testimonies, collected in an accountable way, and presented in a documentary and online format that has helped to garner a great deal of attention for the issue.

The team noted that in Lima, as in other parts of Peru, many resist the idea that the state policy on sterilisation was discriminatory and unjust. So, the team developed an engagement strategy that focused on screenings





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in the provinces where women had these experiences, and the promotion of both the web interactive documentary and the film internationally, where they hoped to build sympathy for their cause. This distribution strategy led to coverage of the web interactive documentary, the short film and therefore the issue in many international outlets, such as: The Guardian, The New York Times, The Independent, Scroll India, Wired, BBC World Service, TV Perú Noticias, La República, The Conversation, Latin Correspondent, New Internationalist, El País, New Statesman and more.

The increased visibility brought more visitors to the website and opened possibilities for alliances with other organisations working on forced sterilisations in other countries like India and the Czech Republic. As a result, they were able to build even greater international support and cooperation around the issue. Esperanza Huayama Aguirre, who is featured in the film, has since become a renowned human rights activist in Peru, has met with Peruvian Ex-President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, visited the UK Parliament looking for support on their case, and has appeared in national and international media including the BBC, Reuters, El País, Vice and other outlets to lobby for the recognition of their grievances.

The solidarity they have received has been important to the women. For many of them, this was the first time that their stories were acknowledged outside their own communities or families. Many reported that listening to other women's stories showed them how their experiences were part of a broader pattern, and this encouraged them to share their story and join forces to seek justice.

Human rights organisations in Peru continue to draw from The Quipu Project archive to support their legal and advocacy work. Amnesty International's Against Their Will campaign has used it to press Peruvian Ex-president Ollanta Humala to track down scores of Andean women who might have been forcibly sterilised by government doctors in the late 1990s, and create a list of potential victims of former President Alberto Fujimori's controversial birth control program as a first step toward compensation. And the Asociación de Mujeres Afectadas por Esterilizaciones Forzadas/AMAEF-C (Association of Women Affected by Forced Sterilisations), a 15-year-old organisation that raises awareness of the issue and represents over 1,300 women who were forcibly sterilised, has seen an increase in the number of women interested in organising with them, and their organisation being more recognised national and internationally.

In the last two presidential elections in Peru, Keiko Fujimori (Alberto Fijumori's daughter) ran and lost. Throughout her campaign, she consistently denied any wrongdoing by her father's sterilisations programme, and her success would have certainly quashed the women's efforts. While there is no way to directly measure the Quipu project's impact on her campaign, what is clear is that the fight for justice of the women's groups, presented in different forms and platforms, helped to create a more conscious and sympathetic perception of the sterilised women throughout the country. The film and project played a role in that, since every form of support for the women's campaign, including the exposure of their own testimonies, was crucial in influencing the popular vote against Fujimori.

Other Case Studies:

***The Quipu Project***

***Transgender, at War and in Love***

***Water Warriors***

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

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Other Case Studies:

*The Quipu Project*

*Transgender, at War and in Love*

*Water Warriors*

## ***Transgender, At War And In Love:*** Changing Minds

***Transgender, at War and in Love*** was a film that emerged out of the TransMilitary project, which strived to help elevate the stories of transgender service members who were still banned following the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Activities to achieve transgender inclusion were driven by organisations such as the research think-tank *The Palm Center* and the advocacy organisation SPART\*A, which worked with service members to educate people within the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) about ending the ban. Fiona Dawson had never made a film before, but she was involved in this effort and knew they needed a way to communicate why some DoD policies were outdated and discriminatory against transgender service members.

*“Presenting the data alone just wasn’t going to do that. We also needed to touch hearts and minds,”* she explained.

When the *New York Times* learned she had started documenting the stories of transgender service members to raise awareness of their concerns, they teamed her up with director Gabriel Silverman and producer Jamie Coughlin of SideXSide Studios. Things started moving quickly after that. Within six weeks time they had their short about Logan and Laila, an emotionally compelling love story that helps audience members understand the impact of these policies on people’s lives. The timing worked in the film’s favor: Caitlin Jenner had her Vanity Fair cover that same week, so the media was abuzz with the story and anything related. As a result, *Transgender, at War and in Love* became one of the most viewed Op-Docs.





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The same afternoon of the film’s release, the Air Force elevated discharges to the Pentagon level, meaning that if a leader wanted to discharge an Airman for being transgender they had to send the directive up to the the central Air Force review board. “We’re sure this directive didn’t get put together in a few hours and had likely been in motion for some time, but we think the Op-Doc probably nudged it forward a bit more quickly than it might have otherwise,” says Dawson.

Whether this was simply a moment of stars aligning or if there was a bit of cause and effect, we may never know. But what’s certain is that when it comes to using film to raise awareness and “change minds,” timing can make all the difference. A well-crafted release plan can build on existing momentum, add nuance to the popular narrative, and direct it in strategic directions (such as the military) to help the broader public make new connections and build public pressure.

*Transgender, at War and in Love* has been used within the military in various local units and educational institutions, and one of the film’s subjects, Army veteran Laila Ireland has given numerous speaking engagements after the short’s screening. The free availability of the piece online through the Op-Docs platform means the team was not able to track all the ways it was used. But three years after the film’s release, in June 2016, the ban was lifted. This was the work of countless unsung organisers and institutions across the country, the sacrifices of transgender service members, the efforts of civic and military leadership, and various other media stories about the issue. They all worked in concert to make it happen. And this short film also played a part in that.

For her work on the film, Fiona Dawson received the White House LGBTQ Artist Champion of Change award in 2015 and *Transgender, at War and in Love* won the White House News Photographers Association’s Best Documentary. It was nominated for a GLAAD Award in the Outstanding Digital Journalism - Multimedia category, and was a nominee for “Outstanding Short Documentary” in the 37th Annual News & Documentary Emmy® Awards.

The team has since continued to leverage the momentum towards the development of their next feature-length doc, *TransMilitary*, and Dawson is in post-production on a short narrative film she directed which tells a bisexual story, *More Than He Knows*.

Other Case Studies:

*The Quipu Project*

*Transgender, at War and in Love*

*Water Warriors*

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## ***Water Warriors:***

### Building Power and Community

**This powerful 22 minute story takes place in Mi'kma'ki territory, in New Brunswick, Canada, just north of the U.S. state of Maine.** It captures a multicultural group of unlikely warriors, including members of the Mi'kmaq Elsipogtog First Nation, French-speaking Acadians and white anglophone families, who mobilise resistance to prevent oil exploration on their lands. After months of resistance, setting up a series of road blockades, their efforts not only halted drilling, but they also elected a new government and in 2016 won an indefinite moratorium on fracking in the province.

Filmmaker Michael Premo initially thought they would make a longer piece, as there was enough footage and he was not committed to a short. But as the story unfolded he realised that, structurally, to create the rhythm and pacing that was evocative of the intensity of being in a direct action blockade, a short would work better.

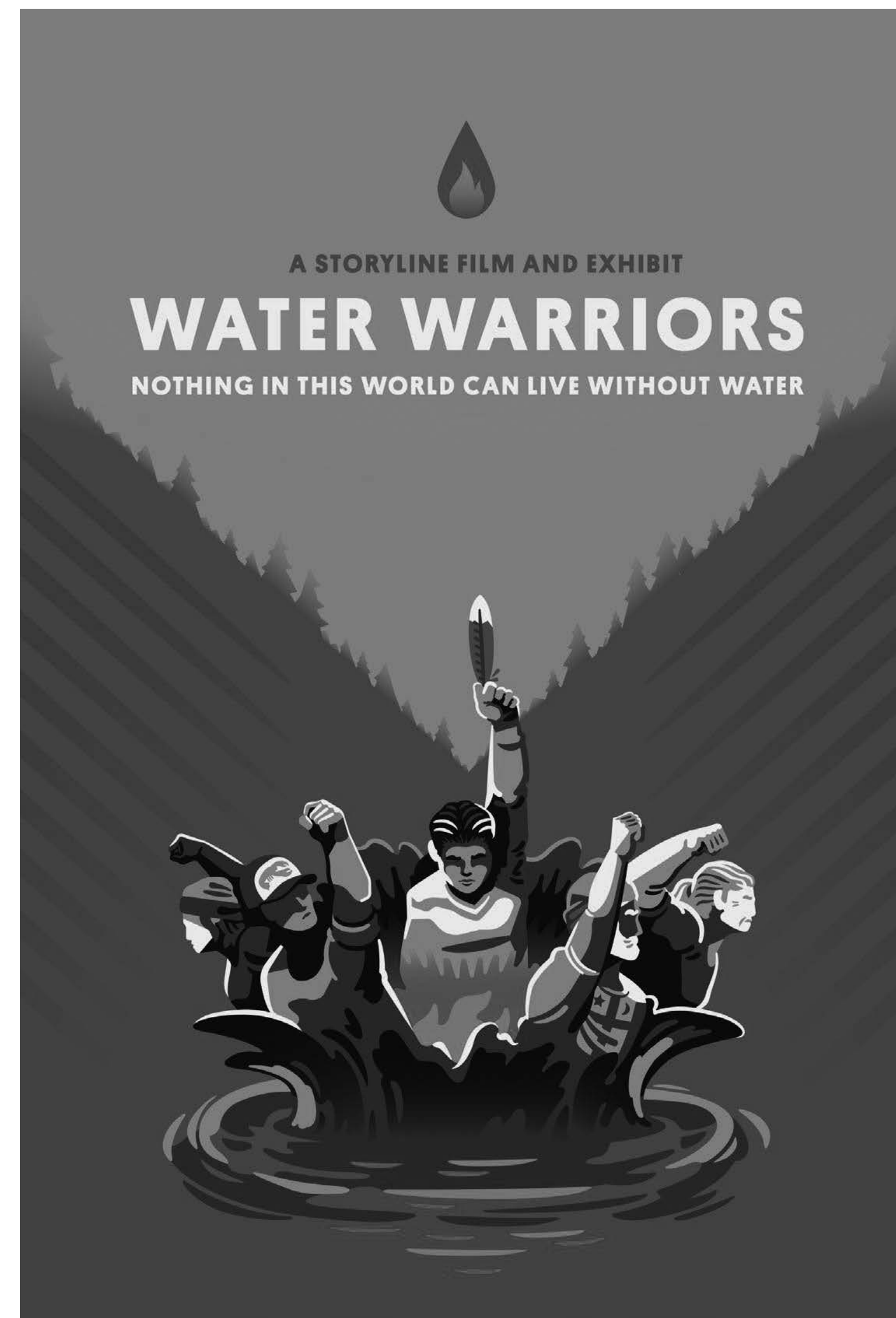
*Water Warriors* became the centerpiece of a transmedia project that included showings of the film, discussions and presentations from community organisations, a touring multimedia exhibit with photos, and regular FaceTime tours of the exhibit in order to connect communities in real time. It was important to the film team to use the story and exhibit to create spaces where other communities could engage and discuss the project in real-time, and be inspired to also mobilise resistance. So they worked with Indigenous educators to offer communities a kit with film posters and promotional images, a curriculum on colonisation/decolonisation,

Other Case Studies:

***The Quipu Project***

***Transgender, at War and in Love***

***Water Warriors***





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and a 32-page Screening Guide with discussion prompts, a sample event agenda, and background info on the film and the struggle it documents.

The team hoped this film about this movement, a precursor to the Standing Rock protests, could be used as a resource to support communities on the frontlines of struggles to protect natural resources, assert Indigenous sovereignty, and promote a just transition to equitable clean energy solutions. So they designed a campaign plan to help them do that.

Because they had a very modest budget, they had to remain nimble so that they could build off momentum when and where it was being generated. The campaign kicked off with a robust film festival tour; to date it has screened at 75 festivals in twelve countries, including Tribeca, Doc NYC, DOXA International, Black Star, American Indian Film Festival and Red Nation Film Festival. So the team leveraged these festival showings and the enthusiasm they generated toward a series of new opportunities, such as a deal - brokered by the Tribeca Film Festival - to get *Water Warriors* onto TVs in airports and waiting rooms through the ReachTV service.

Tribeca also brokered a deal to get the film onto 1,295 United Airlines in-flight entertainment systems, serving about 150 millions customers annually. And the Black Star Film festival screening led to a deal to show the film through the Xfinity Streampix, Comcast Cable's streaming service. A Canadian SVOD company, Dokku, also picked the film up. Eventually the film launched into educational distribution through New Day Films and is currently also available for streaming through Kanopy.



Without a national broadcast or a theatrical run, the film team also had to get creative about how to create a moment with the film to generate interest in the movement. So, they leveraged a partnership with The Council of Canadians, Canada's leading social action organisation, which has over 60 active chapters, to successfully mobilise hundreds of constituents for an international day of action. As a result, *Water Warriors* premiered almost simultaneously in small communities across eight provinces where the story might not otherwise have traveled, including the Northwest Territories, rural Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Manitoba. This led to a profile of the campaign in Canada's top progressive online publication, Rabble.ca, and also became part of the United Nation's World Water Day celebrations in Toronto, Washington, DC and Rio de Janeiro, among others.

Other Case Studies:

*The Quipu Project*

*Transgender, at War and in Love*

*Water Warriors*

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*The Quipu Project*

*Transgender, at War and in Love*

*Water Warriors*

Another characteristic of the *Water Warriors* impact campaign was that it had a hyperlocal strategy. This posed both challenges and rewards. It was challenging because the local groups were varied in type, focus, and composition. Some were volunteer-run, others were staffed. All of these differences required a customised outreach plan for each, which can be a time consuming endeavor and therefore costly. However, this allowed them to be attentive to the varied contexts and points of focus where they screened, and targeted in their efforts.

The result was customised partnerships with over 100 organisations and grassroots groups to host events in Oregon, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, and New Brunswick, Canada - each of them locations threatened by pipelines, fracking and offshore drilling - including less-publicised projects such as the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline in Louisiana, Line 3 in Minnesota, and Site C dam in Northern British Columbia. The events each incorporated different activities designed to increase organisations' membership, build awareness around environmental issues and bring together diverse groups of residents who don't often intersect, who aren't already involved with an advocacy or organising effort, and who might not normally attend a typical "activist" meeting.

These activities led a variety of groups to take action in their communities, from school and small grassroots groups such as People's Place Library in Antigonish Nova Scotia to national-level membership organisations such as the Green Party of Canada and gatherings like the Red Tide International Indigenous Climate Action Summit in Te Kaha, Aotearoa (New Zealand). For example, one screening inspired a group to pressure the San Francisco Estuary Institute to pay a voluntary land tax. Another led

a group to gather at their MP's office to voice objectives to the Kinder Morgan expansion. And other anecdotal reports from partners suggested people were using the film as part of meetings and events to attract new members.

The team has continued to fundraise to support indigenous leaders to use the film to inspire others. With support from Patagonia, they were able to help at least one of the young First Nation activists in the film, Nipwai, travel through rural areas of western Canada to encampments actively blocking infrastructure, to help spread the story of their success. In fact, they translated the film into French and Spanish and sent copies to people working to block infrastructure developments in Mexico, Central American and Puerto Rico.





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Still from *Water Warriors* documentary



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# Geek out

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##### Do you want to learn more?

[onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/anti.12316](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/anti.12316)

Do you want to learn more about the ways digital technologies can enable participatory knowledge production across geographic, social and linguistic divides? This scholarly article about *The Quipu Project* is for you. It considers the new forms of engagement between knowledge-producers and audiences that digital methods can encourage. Have a look.



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# 6.0 MEASURING IMPACT



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## WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

The conversation about how to assess the impact a film has had on the issues it addresses has come a long way over the last five years.

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With the advent of so many impact campaigns and sophisticated audience engagement strategies, filmmakers want to know, what influence did our film have? How much influence, with who exactly, and why? And what did we learn in the process? And as funders, researchers and others take notice of the valuable role film plays in advancing change - we're seeing myriad attempts to track, understand and communicate that impact.

Press pause for a minute. Is it really possible to measure the impact of a creative work?

The answer of course is: yes and no.

On the one hand, there are some observable things that can absolutely be measured. For example: what audiences learned; how their attitudes have shifted; what actions they've taken or new behaviours and relationships that have taken root. On the other hand, there are some things that most likely cannot be measured. When a story or experience lands in a person's heart, it can take root in unexpected and inexplicable ways - only to show up, unprompted, days, weeks, months or years later at a moment when it might count the most. That's the magic

of film and other creative works. And it's unlikely that even the best evaluators can account for that kind of impact.

A strong and effective plan for tracking impact deploys techniques that make a connection between a film, the elements of a film campaign, the intended impacts of a campaign, and the changes that indicate the film and the campaign have contributed to intended (and unintended) impact in a meaningful way. It could also allow you to learn about your activities and strategies and even adapt based on these learnings along the way. It is, fundamentally, a powerful way to make more change happen faster.

An effective plan also enables you to collect data that can inform and communicate your film's story of impact. Who will tell your story if you don't?

Great impact assessment and evaluation will help you to secure new funders and to maintain existing funders. In a changing media landscape, this is critical to the sustainability of our field.

When film teams can report on real, tangible impact, it lends legitimacy and bolsters the sustainability of this kind of work more broadly. Being able to show how your film is creating change in the world will also impress and comfort all the other kinds of partners we want to work with, from grassroots organisers to leading campaign organisations. Tracking impact allows you to demonstrate what a film project is going to deliver that their army of expert campaigners, lobbyists and researchers cannot.



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It also supports learning for the film impact field as a whole, so that we can learn from each other and improve.

Wait. Does that mean that all film projects should always be evaluated? No. Not all. That feels like overkill. But there are some films where it will be incredibly valuable to understand fully what happened. And we need enough in the documentary ecosystem to learn from each other and ride on each others coattails and successes.

Okay. still interested? Then the first questions are; What do we want to know? Why do we want to know it? How will we use the information we gather and who will we share it with? Do we have the resources or the competency for a robust evaluation or just a lighter touch assessment? What will we do if we don't like the feedback we get? It's best to be honest before getting too far ahead. If all you want or need to do is track reach (online, offline or both) then you may not need to pursue a formal evaluation.

In this chapter, we'll dig deep into impact measurement, exploring what makes it great, what makes it complex, mapping out a plan with the help of a worksheet, and reviewing a multitude of tools to help you with execution. And we'll draw on a few case studies to illustrate what we mean.

From reporting on straight-forward quantitative metrics, to more robust impact assessments that incorporate qualitative and quantitative data, to fully-fledged evaluations that triangulate data from multiple sources and capture information at multiple points during the life of a film project, there are a range of ways to explore what happened with your film.

We'll start by helping you refine the goals from the **Strategic Plan** you made in **Chapter Two**, then identify some indicators, or data points, that you'll be looking to gather, using our **Impact Measurement toolkit** to find out what will work for you. There's also some practical help on designing surveys and an overview of tools available to film teams to help you make the most of your impact measurement work.





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THE IMPACT  
**FIELD GUIDE**  
& TOOLKIT  
*From Art to Impact*

MY EVALUATION PLAN NAME OF FILM:  
IMPACT VISION:

IMPACT GOAL <small>From your Strategic Plan above</small>	IMPACT INDICATOR <small>evidence you have been successful</small>	TOOL/TECHNIQUE <small>For capturing the evidence</small>	BASE LINE <small>Any relevant data from before release you can measure against</small>	DATE 1/2/3/4 <small>Evidence collected over time to reveal patterns of change</small>

THE IMPACT  
**FIELD GUIDE**  
& TOOLKIT  
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MY STRATEGIC PLAN NAME OF FILM:  
IMPACT VISION:

FILM'S MESSAGES <small>That audiences take away from the film</small>	IMPACT GOAL <small>Concrete solution that your project could aim for</small>	KEY AGENTS <small>Who can make this happen?</small>	IMPACT DYNAMIC <small>• Changing minds • Changing behaviours • Building communities • Changing structures</small>	IMPACT TASKS <small>What needs to happen with your film/campaign to make the agent deliver</small>



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## WHAT MAKES GREAT EVALUATION?

In this section we talk about evaluation specifically, not just tracking or assessing impact. That's because an evaluation goes beyond the question: what happened? Instead, an evaluation plan presents a formal approach for determining the extent to which certain objectives have been achieved and how the film project contributed. Think of evaluation as learning about how well your Strategic Plan is working.

As with all other stages of this process, your evaluation will be unique to your film. That's why we emphasise learning and tracking.



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## LEARNING

Great evaluation is not only about understanding whether the objectives of a film project were achieved, but also about learning throughout the project.

One of the most common mistakes is to think of evaluation as a final product, rather than a process. It's an easy mistake to make, because you'll probably pull everything together into an evaluation report at some point. But, while that's an important part of the process, the journey and what is learned along the way is often just as important (and sometimes more).

The right way to think about evaluation is as an iterative process of learning, which starts as soon as the film is put out into the world, or even before that, as you work with potential partners and stakeholders to prep for broadcast or theatrical release. And, because it is ongoing, it means you are in a position to react to what you are learning and refine your impact strategy - and even your evaluation approach - along the way, making the most of every opportunity.

What you track and measure for your evaluation - and the results - will ideally tie back to the unique goals and objectives you identified in your vision and Strategic Plan, while also accounting for any strategic midcourse shifts. In other words, your evaluation plan should align with your impact strategy.

A strong evaluation plan will look at both the influence of film and the contribution and impact of the campaign around the film. In other words, whereas a film might deepen the understanding of an audience member, it is the event planning that might lead an audience member to take a specific action. A strong evaluation plan will take stock of, and account for, the distinct but intersecting components of the campaign strategy, so that the evaluation can uncover what aspects of the campaign are working as intended and which may need to be adjusted.

A strong evaluation plan is proactive and inclusive. Share it with funders and partners. In fact, create it with them. Ask what matters to them, why they funded the project, and consider their goals as well as your own. Done right, evaluation will reveal information that multiple and varied stakeholders are looking for whilst ensuring - and informing - a strategic and powerful path forward.

A strong evaluation is also honest and attentive to the role of a film within larger contexts. In other words, it keeps the film in its place rather than centring it more than it needs.

A strong evaluation knows its limitations and states them clearly. In other words, it knows what it can say and what it can't say. It's clear on what it can back up with concrete evidence and sound analysis versus what it suspects or assumes. Correlations are fine in evaluation - and they're often the only thing that is possible, since it can be so difficult to accurately measure causation. Just be clear and upfront about your process and analysis so that your reader doesn't interpret such a finding as causation.



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Yes, time and resources are limited. But if you applied for and received funding, then some kind of reporting will be necessary. You can use those requirements as a starting point for what kind of evaluation to pursue, even if you do nothing else.

This is why we were so careful to emphasise in the Planning chapter that the Strategic Plan you came up with was only version 0.1. Because the unexpected will happen, and evaluation will help you to respond to it faster.

**PRO TIP: Start early, start small... just start.**

The worst thing you can do is build evaluation up into such a big deal in your head that you don't start collecting some data, and learning something, right from the beginning. Even if you just start by asking one question of everyone at a rough-cut screening – that's a start. You can always improve it next time.

**HERE ARE 4 EASY STEPS TO GET STARTED:**

1. First, lay out your goals for the project (hint: you did that at the start of this guide).
2. Next, brainstorm the kinds of outcomes your activities could prompt on the way to your goals (hint: better understanding, new commitments or collaborations, new narratives, etc.)
3. Then, identify all the kinds of observable and collectable data you could gather to indicate that those outcomes are happening and determine how you will collect data (hint: the indicator matrix in 6.5 can help).
4. Start collecting and tracking your data! (Eventually you will analyse it and it will go into your final report.)

We'll dig into this in more detail in the next sections. But first up, a case study to bring it all to life.

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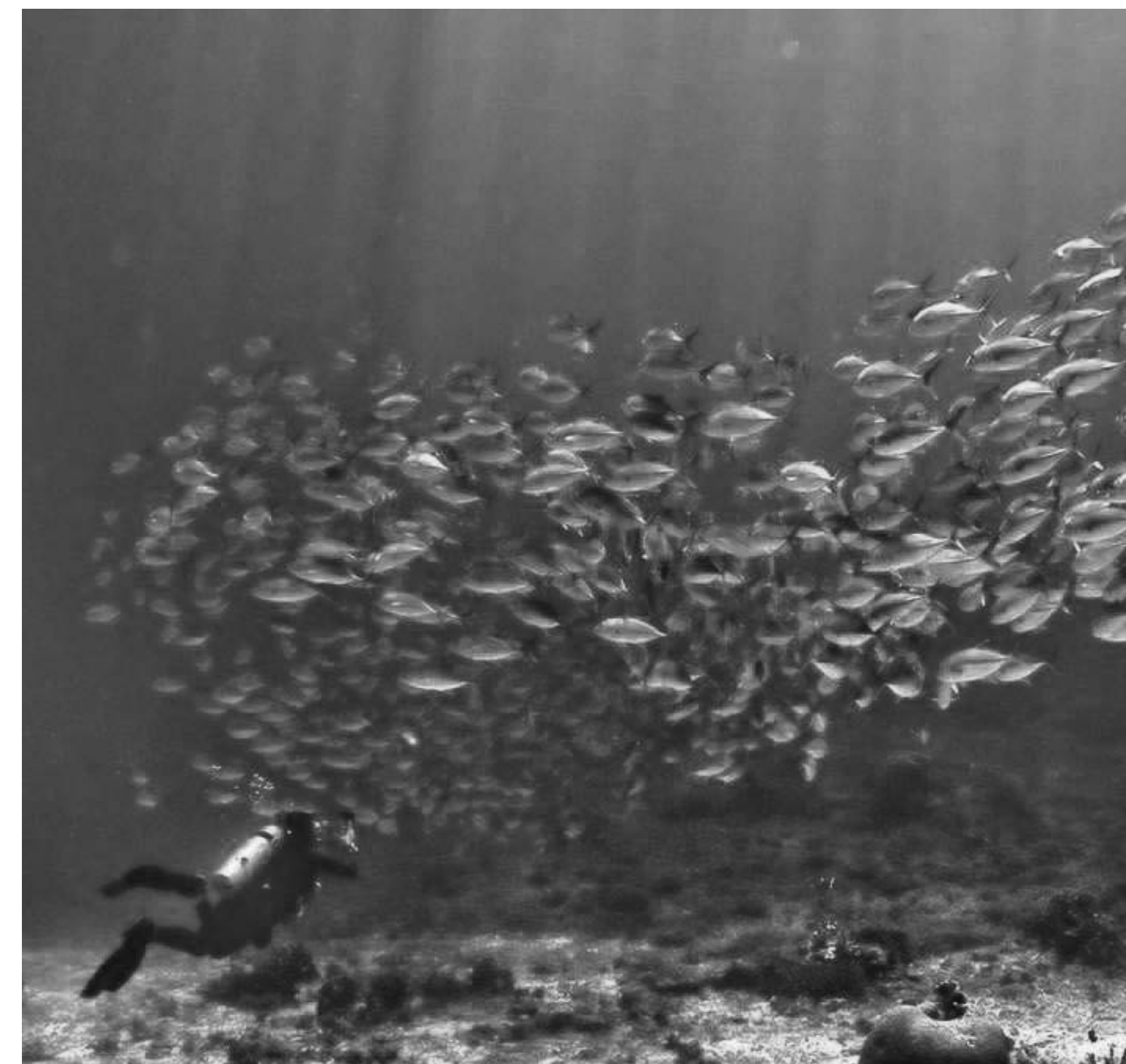
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## Case study: *The End of the Line*

**The sample Impact Plan from *The End of the Line* that you'll find in the [planning chapter](#) is a long way from where the team thought they were going when they finished the film.** Initially, their focus was firmly on changing political structures – and specifically on achieving a ban on Bluefin tuna fishing. The role of public awareness in their working theory of change was as a means to gather signatures on a petition to this effect.

But entry and exit surveys carried out at two London launch screenings of the film highlighted a different role for the public. The film achieved the major increase in awareness and perceived urgency that the team hoped for, by 85%. But what they didn't necessarily predict was the commitment to personal behaviour change. Across the whole audience, commitment to buying sustainable fish almost doubled from 43% to 84% after one screening of the film. Although both remained important, this refocused the team's approach more on personal consumption than on petition signing.

Another shift came soon after. Changing the procurement policy of restaurants and food retailers was part of the strategy – but relative to the focus on political change, not the main part. But then British supermarket Waitrose stopped selling swordfish and joined as a distribution partner for the film. And Pret A Manger founder Julian Metcalfe, after attending a preview screening, announced a total change in fish sourcing policy on the day the film launched. Then another major UK grocery chain, Marks & Spencer, announced a change to their tuna sourcing in the week after opening.



It became clear to the team that corporate policy change could be directly triggered by this film, and that this could make a massive impact, both directly on overfishing and through corporate communication to their customers on public awareness. They realised this would be an alternate way to build pressure for political change. So, they shifted strategy and began to deliberately seek this kind of change – resulting in policy change from major food brands like Sodexo and Compass, and restaurants and celebrity chefs including Jamie Oliver, Tom Aikens, Antonio Carluccio and Raymond Blanc.

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The film team gathered data, thought through the implications of early successes, reoriented their strategy, and moved. That's great evaluation.

If you're curious, open, and take an evaluative approach to your campaign development, then you're likely to make changes to your strategic planning. We see this over and over again. Take *Blackfish*. The team didn't set out to campaign with their film. Initially their main goal was to raise mass public understanding of a previously unrecognised issue. But, due to the swell in public sentiment, the film came to the attention of animal advocacy groups who subsequently brought attention to the issues the film raises through their own campaign work, rather than it being initiated and driven by the film team. It was an unexpected turn of events in terms of the trajectory of the film, but ultimately resulted in an extraordinary, organic and unprecedented outcome in terms of its impact, known as 'The Blackfish Effect'.

### TRACKING

Great evaluation tracks more than numbers. Perhaps the greatest fear around evaluation stems from

the idea of reducing everything to numbers. Damn right. Great art cannot be reduced to a formula, so neither should your evaluation plan. You also need qualitative data - data that is about understanding how and why your film is having impact.

Just as you would gather material for a film - where you collect lots of small interviews, stills and B-roll footage together in a file - collect every article about the campaign, list every community screening (ideally with audience estimates), file every 'your film changed my life' email and make a note of every local politician who referenced your film in a speech. Everything.

Like the film material, this all adds up. Over a period of months and years, you'll start to create a rich picture of your film's journey through the world and how it has affected people and institutions and contributed to movements.

Yes, this takes up time, but it needn't be overwhelming. Put regular evaluation time in as a team, ideally every week - because it's most seamless and works best as a little-and-often process. Setting aside time in your diary and sticking to it is a super-simple but very effective way of making you keep on top of it.

### GREAT EVALUATION TRACKS CONSISTENTLY

Lindsay Green Barber of [Impact Architects](#) suggests film teams systematise their data collection. One of the most valuable and fundamental principles of evaluation is consistency. In other words, if you ask all your partners the same three questions, it offers you a basis to make meaningful statements about what is happening across partners.



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But don't be deterred from asking more tailored and customised questions as well. While having a set of core questions that are asked consistently across partners is important, it may also be important to ask different questions to different types of partners or audience members to shed light on their unique backgrounds, contexts, and/or participation.

### **GREAT EVALUATION TRACKS ONLY WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

While numbers are often quicker to come by, they are not necessarily the data you need. Twitter followers and audience statistics, while they are easily available and might well be important if your primary **Impact Dynamic** is about Changing Minds, are far less relevant if your work is more focused on Changing Structures.

In the worst-case scenario, you'll spend time and energy gathering data, yet once gathered, it won't tell you anything material about whether your strategy is working or what you might need to change. There'll be noise, not signal.

### **PRO TIP: Don't confuse reach with impact.**

Audience viewing figures, whether offline (from cinema/ DVD & Digital/community screenings/ schools) or basic online metrics (like the number of web views on YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, Google Analytics, Twitter) have been the standard way that the media industry have demonstrated or defined success: the highest rated show, the number one box office hit... But these tend only to define marketing and broad distribution success.

In the business of impact evaluation, these figures are

useful in so far as they demonstrate reach or perhaps penetration into a target audience - but they do not prove impact. We don't know what happened to the viewer, what it meant to them, or what if anything changed.

Having said that, in contexts where film teams are contending with intense censorship, simply getting a film seen can be very important. The *An Insignificant Man* team, for example, experienced a protracted legal battle with the Central Board of Film Certification in India, which sought to stay the film's release. The team eventually won a landmark judgement, allowing them to release the film. Given that this was a film about corruption and democracy, getting the widest possible reach for the film was in and of itself a boon. But how does this context influence the shape and focus of an evaluation?

Remember that a strong evaluation plan tracks progress with respect to intended outcomes. In other words, the fact of this judgement doesn't tell us much about the film's impact on viewers broadly speaking or *how* it shaped thinking related to corruption and democracy in India. It does, however, tell us something about the film's impact on *some* viewers (the Board and related government representatives).

But context is also important to understanding the life of a film and its impact. And an evaluation must be attentive to it and to unintended consequences like this legal battle, as well as its implications. As such, clearly the film and this case together influenced popular conversations in India. Through an evaluative lens, it's useful to look at this whole picture, but also to separate the component parts, i.e. the film's impact as distinct from the impact of the case.

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IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING



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## Case study: *Budrus*

**A critical aim for the *Budrus* team was to shift the media narrative to give more recognition and validation to the role of nonviolent protest in a conflict that is too often lazily depicted as universally aggressive.**

Neither audience numbers nor social media followers nor press column inches, nor even surveys would help them understand whether they were having this impact. No numbers would help. But nor, for that matter, would focus groups or other traditional qualitative means of gathering data.

So instead, knowing they needed a different way to assess whether they were having the desired impact, the team partnered up with the PR firm Strategy One, and took on a content analysis of all the media relating to the village of Budrus before and after, looking at both quantity and quality of coverage – both whether coverage increased, and how the story was told.

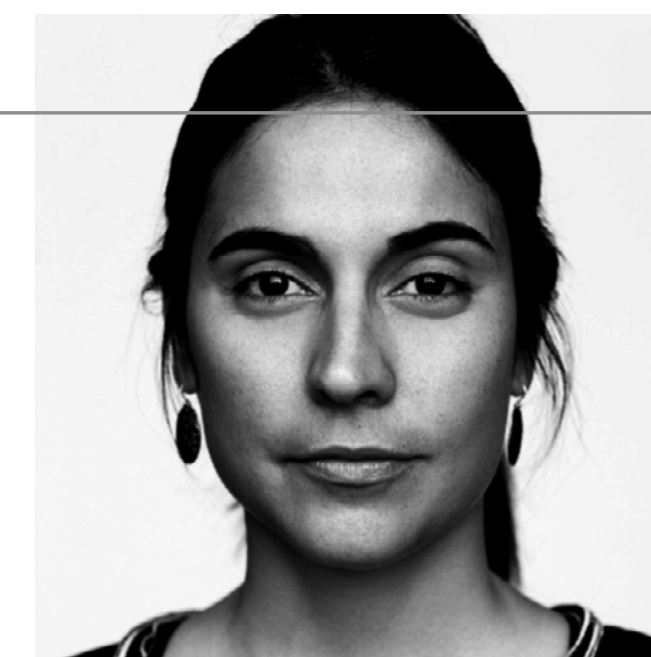
The results showed that, while there had been some limited media coverage of events in Budrus prior to the release of the film, nearly all of that coverage was conducted through a law-and-order lens, treating the protests in Budrus as disturbances of the peace. On the other hand, after the release of the film, most of the media items incorporated the key message that the team had laid out early in the production process: that the people of Budrus were engaged in a nonviolent struggle to save their lands and olive trees. The study showed conclusively that, beyond putting Budrus on the map,

the film successfully shifted the media narrative about events in the village - from one about chaotic riots to one about a strategic, nonviolent campaign.

The *Budrus* team recognised the difficulty of gathering data against one of their key Impact Goals, asked the experts, and found a way to get the data they needed to assess and inform their unique strategy. That's great evaluation.

**“With *Budrus*, we measured success both by soliciting qualitative feedback from the range of audiences we came into contact with (hearing, for example, from a Palestinian village that was so galvanised after watching the film that they had one of their most organised and spirited protests ever the following day, or from an Israeli-American for whom the film served as a central catalyst to become more involved as an activist living in Jerusalem), and by allowing a major public relations firm to conduct an independent audit on the media impact of the film.”**

Julia Bacha  
*Budrus*



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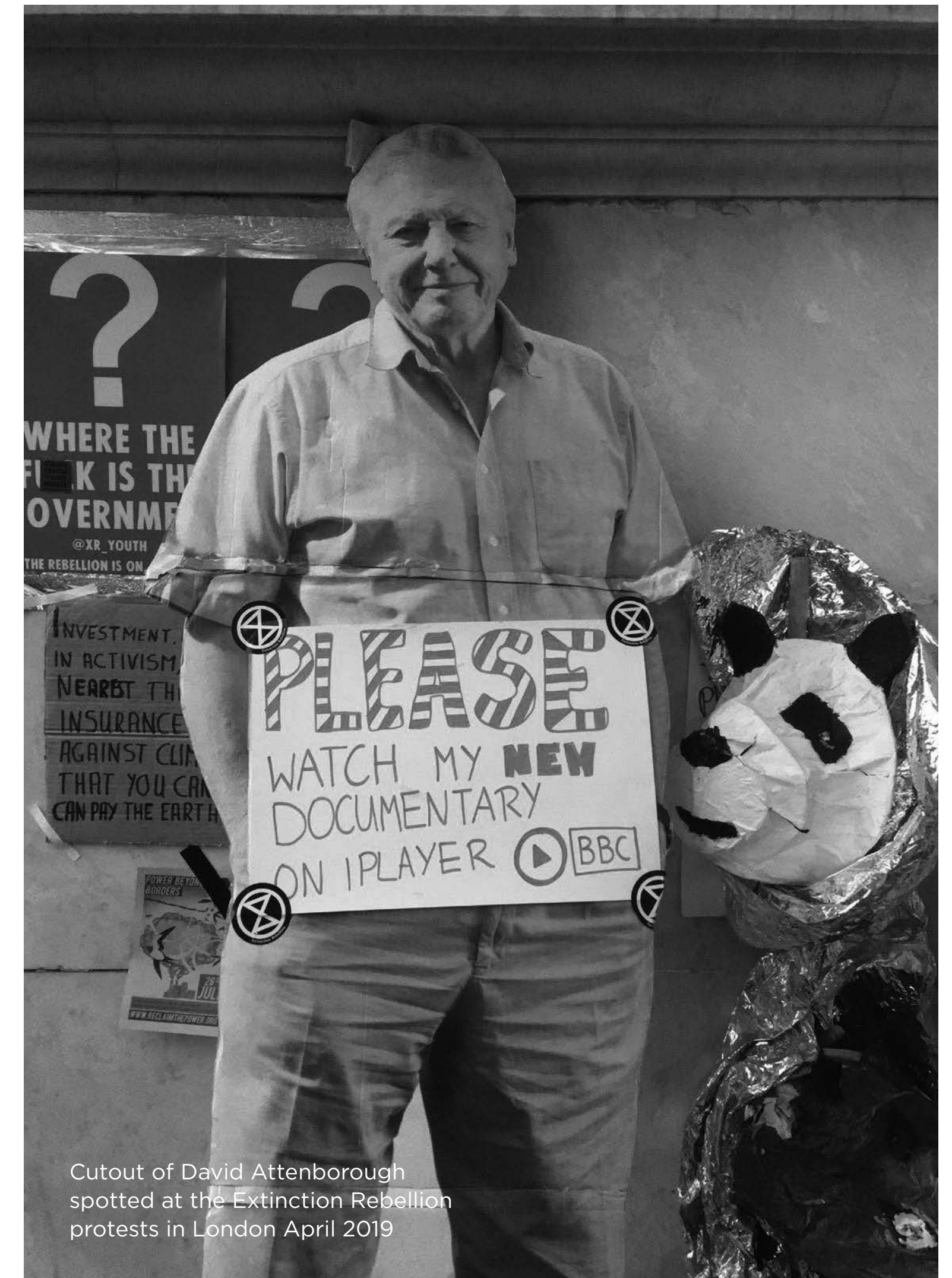
## THE RIGHT KIND OF ANALYSIS FOR YOUR PROJECT

The report **“No Fracking Way! Documentary Film, Discursive Opportunity, and Local Opposition against Hydraulic Fracturing in the United States, 2010 to 2013”** is an in-depth study of the film Gasland. In it the authors, using content analysis and other sociological research methods, find that Gasland had a significant impact on public discourse and activity. It also finds that the film contributed to the success of anti-fracking mobilisations and municipal bans on fracking. This retrospective look at what happened is a powerful testament to what's possible with film.

But let's be honest: not every film team can or even wants to hire a social science research firm or university researchers to do a deep dive evaluation of their impact campaigns, nor should they. There are benefits and limitations to different evaluation methods.

This Active Voice Lab report offers valuable food for thought about different approaches to assessing impact, as it compares and contrasts a Doc Society Impact Report and a Harmony Labs social science evaluation. It finds there are benefits and limitations to each.

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Cutout of David Attenborough spotted at the Extinction Rebellion protests in London April 2019



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## SO WHAT'S THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOU?

**Impact Assessment:** This often take a lighter touch and can be more focused or limited to a particular component of a project. Often, it offers a case study with anecdotes and some qualitative and quantitative measures that you've gathered over the course of your campaign. It can be a valuable and relatively accessible way to tell a story about what happened. Just take care not to make grand statements that you can't back up with strong evidence.

**Formal Evaluation:** This tends to be a more robust and comprehensive examination of the impact of a project. If you decide to partner with a social science researchers to help you evaluate the impact of your efforts, you've made the decision to go deep. Just be prepared for what you get. A true evaluation may bring back answers you don't like, so be honest about whether or not that's the direction you'd like to go in.

The truth is, it's rarely so cut and dry, and hybrids are possible too. The intent here is simply to invite you and your team to consider where on the spectrum you lie. Discuss together your needs and the purpose of the evaluation, as well as the capacity and resources you have, before settling on your approach to measuring impact.



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Filmstill from *500 Years* by director Pamela Yates & producer Paco de Onís.



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## Further reading

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#### GREAT EVALUATION TRACKS ONLY WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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##### **“Why WITNESS and Other Nonprofits are Adopting the Serious Business of Monitoring and Evaluation”**

[blog.witness.org/2014/08/nonprofits-monitoring-and-evaluation/](http://blog.witness.org/2014/08/nonprofits-monitoring-and-evaluation/)

In “Why WITNESS and Other Nonprofits Are Adopting the Serious Business of Monitoring and Evaluation” Sara Federlein offers a clear affirmation of the need for evaluation among human rights organisations while also stressing the importance of remaining nimble, and flexible.

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#### THE RIGHT KIND OF ANALYSIS FOR YOUR PROJECT

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##### **AV Lab and Lindsay Green Barber analysis of *Gasland***

[activevoice.net/blog/how-do-we-know-shovels-work](http://activevoice.net/blog/how-do-we-know-shovels-work)

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##### **‘No Fracking Way!’ Documentary Film, Discursive Opportunity, and Local Opposition against Hydraulic Fracturing in the United States, 2010 to 2013**

[sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/09/150902093514.htm](http://sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/09/150902093514.htm)

The study by the American Sociological Association that was done 5 years after the campaign.

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##### **Artist and scientist Heidi Boisvert on the Ethics of Using biometric and AI for Media Effects Research**

[youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=kNZeVBqQiSQ](https://youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=kNZeVBqQiSQ)

Artist and scientist Heidi Boisvert wrestles with the question, “If you can design a tool (to measure the neuroscience of pop culture), but it can be turned into a weapon, should you build it?” as she shares her breakthrough audience data.

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##### **A policy audience response to an online screening of *The Homestretch***

[cmsimpact.org/resource/connecting-audiences-ovee-online-screening-platform-assessment-homestretch-pbs-documentary](http://cmsimpact.org/resource/connecting-audiences-ovee-online-screening-platform-assessment-homestretch-pbs-documentary)

This study by CMSI examines and analyzes a policy audience response to an online screening of *The Homestretch*, an independent documentary film about homeless youth in the American education system.



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## EMBRACE COMPLEXITY

**C**ontext. Context. Context.

Great assessment and evaluation recognises that impact is complex and accounts for context. Different issues, different kinds of impact, and different kinds of films all intersect in different ways and this complexity has three big consequences.

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First, we need to be proportionate about the role of film, and of the team, in the story of change. You shouldn't expect to – or indeed try to – prove direct causation of the big, end-of-chain change in the world. Remember that your film is likely a part of a movement, but unlikely to be the cause of it. The most you will ever do, indeed the most anyone will ever do, is contribute. And this is important to untangle.

*The Invisible War*, as we saw in [Chapter 2](#), helped contribute to culture change around sexual abuse in the military. Looking back, we can see it was one piece in a constellation of media, activities, leadership and intersecting efforts that led to the #MeToo movement. Similarly, *Bully* contributed to a tremendous amount of traction on the issue of bullying in schools. CNN even did a special, “The Bully Effect” to explore the impact the film had had. And yet even so, how can we isolate the impact of *Bully* from the constellation of other actors, such as the It Gets Better Project, that focused on elevating popular attention to the issue at about the same time.

*The Invisible War* team were able to make clear claims

about the policy momentum the film built because there are statements from policymakers who attribute their positions and actions to the film. Similarly, The Bully Project signed up over 140 mayors across the United States to learn about and take local action to improve school climates and reduce bullying, and years later is now working with the American Academy of Pediatrics to train pediatricians to screen for and advocate for patients impacted by bullying. It too will be able to make the claim that the film has had a direct impact on the will and capacity of the pediatricians they've trained to support bullied youth. So, be proportionate. Be accurate and give credit where it is due.

Second, part of complexity is unintended consequences. However good and noble your intentions, there is a chance that what you do might cause harm. What you can and should do with evaluation is be alert to this, devote time to identifying possible risk areas, and gather data on those as well. For example, you might regularly survey the response of the subject community to the film as well as the responses of those whom you're trying to affect. Keep asking the question: is this impact campaign advancing the goals of the movement, and are people on the ground getting what they need? In this way, impact and strategy go hand-in-hand.

This brings us to the final point. The complexity of impact documentary means you will never be able to design for everything. What you can do, though, is understand that impact is inherently unpredictable, so be attentive to your campaign and the work of the movement you're contributing to, and... brace yourself.

**“Progress is never permanent, will always be threatened, must be redoubled, restated and reimagined if it is to survive.”**

Zadie Smith







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### PRO TIPS:

#### DO THE 'SO WHAT?' TEST

Once you've decided what data you want to gather, and indeed throughout the process, keep asking yourself the 'So What?' question. Say you're doing a regular survey, and the number of people who agree with a certain statement has changed. Do you know what you could or would do differently as a result? Is there anything? If not, should you really be asking the question at all, or is it just a waste of time and money?

#### AVOID THE 'GOOD NEWS' TRAP

Once the work is over, you'll naturally want to make the best of it, so in assessing responses, you'll only look for good news and perhaps skirt over the unexpected and unwelcome turn of events. That's human nature. But it's not great a way to measure impact.

#### BE PATIENT - BUT READY TO MOVE!

The nature of complexity is that two scenarios are possible. The first, and more likely, is that it may well take years for the full impact of your project to be ready for a final evaluation report. It's more than likely that you won't be able to report anything truly meaningful for two to three years or more. The second, though, is that it all kicks off with virtually no notice. If the stars align, you could find yourself very busy very quickly. If you're gathering data, you'll stand a chance of spotting the opportunity early.

#### GIVE CREDIT WHERE IT IS DUE

Thank your funders and partners. They've likely been in the trenches for years. You did this together. So pay your respects. It will mean they are more likely to share information and data which could be essential to tracking the impact of your project. They are also more likely to value the evaluation and share it widely if they are properly credited.

#### BE PROUD OF JOINING THE CHOIR

Impact often continues after you've finished reporting on the impact of your work. The life cycle of a film and impact campaign can be open and continuous - long after the case studies have been published. Telling the stories of change that come to light when a film embeds in the culture has its own impact in the larger effort to place artists in the web of social change. Your film has tremendous value, but it's not likely to be the solo voice or the final word.

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## Case study: *Granito vs A Small Act*

In many ways, these two projects could not be more similar – even in name, they bear a strong resemblance. ‘Granito’ translates as ‘tiny grain of sand’, relating to the idea that every individual has their little bit to add to the achievement of social justice. But the two films progressed at dramatically different paces.

The *Granito* project began back in 1982 with the making of *When The Mountains Tremble*, exposing the fact that the Guatemalan government was responsible for the murder of Maya civilians. But only in 2013, after 30 years, could the team really point to concrete impact – with the guilty verdict against General Rios Montt on 10 May 2013.

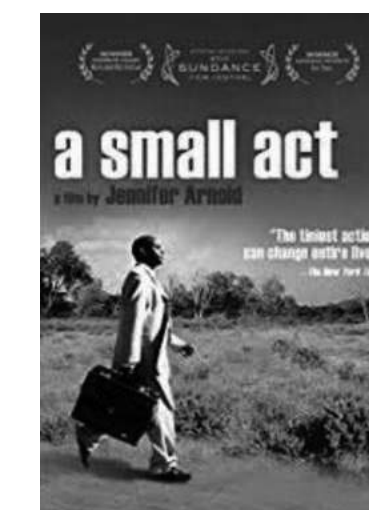
By contrast, the *A Small Act* team had at that point barely considered the idea of an impact campaign, struggling even to get the film finished, by the time of its first screening at Sundance in 2011. And yet, halfway through the screening, a member of the audience stood up and pledged \$5,000 to the Hilde Back Education Fund, the scholarship fund set up by Chris Mburu who is the main protagonist in the film to give Kenyan children the opportunity to get an education just as he had received from Hilde Back. Another audience member followed suit, and by the end of Sundance, \$90,000 had been pledged. By the end of 2013, the team estimate that \$2.4m dollars had been pledged to the fund, an uplift of well over 5000%.

One project found things moving very fast despite little planning, and had to run to keep up – while another had to stick with it for 30 years. As a reminder, that's because

different issues, different kinds of impact, and different kinds of films all intersect in different ways. In the case of these two films, this also resulted in a very different role for evaluation on the two projects. One demanded a more dynamic and adaptive evaluation approach/plan - one that could identify, track and learn from unintended outcomes - while the other did not.

For the *Granito* team, evaluation has been primarily retrospective and about finding more and more ways to build the story, and with it the Maya community's belief in their ability to achieve justice. This evaluation, in the form of a constant and committed presence in Guatemala, and continuous dialogue with the community, has been the inspiration behind the creation of their second and third films, as well as the companion radio, web and participatory documentary projects. It has been a slow but continual process.

The team behind *A Small Act* were forced to be responsive, with opportunities coming at them from all sides, but they also had to make sure they stayed true to their own ambitions for the film. After all, the team's key ambition wasn't necessarily to generate funds for the Hilde Back Education Fund, but to reframe development narratives to illustrate that developing countries often help themselves.



*A Small Act*



*Granito*



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From *Granito*  
*Girls in Nebaj, Guatemala*  
Photo: Jean-Marie Simon



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## YOUR IMPACT EVALUATION PLAN

**Y**ou've had a chance in the previous sections to consider why impact measurement and evaluation matter and what makes them effective. Now we want to help you articulate a plan.

First, if you haven't done so already, take the **Strategic Plan** you developed in **Chapter 2** (Planning), and transfer your impact goals to the Evaluation Plan template. Here's a way to think about this in three simple steps.

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### STEP 1: CLARIFY GOALS

By now, you probably have a sense of what you hope to accomplish with your impact campaign. You have a sense of what your film's strengths are, in other words: its core messages and how it's likely to move people. And you have a few aspirations that relate to these. Now it's time to make sure they are clear and achievable over the course of your campaign.

Ask yourself: to achieve this goal, who needs to be affected or moved? How do we need them to react and engage? What would change as a result of their engagement?

For more on setting goals, refer to section #1 of the excellent [Deepening Engagement For Lasting Impact](#) (pages 6-10), a valuable tool from [Learning for Action](#).

As you proceed with your campaign, and as you collect more data and learn from it, you'll likely challenge and/or refine some of your Impact Goals. That's all part of the process!

### STEP 2: ID INDICATORS

Next, you want to define your Impact Indicators for those outcomes. In other words, what do you expect is going to change that will help you get closer to those goals? And which of these are measurement-ready? Because, as we've discussed in previous sections, not every way a film has an impact can be measured. And sometimes social progress isn't linear or predictable.

An example of an Impact Goal that might be difficult to

measure would be something like: "Get rape on the radar of issues in the US military".

A better articulation might be: "Get every soldier in the US military to see the film and understand how its themes relate to their lives and choices." Impact indicators for this goal might include:

- The number of soldiers who viewed the film
- The number of soldiers who engaged in discussion about the film (on or offline)
- The number of soldiers who indicate that they see connections between the story and their own lives
- The quality of post-screening conversations, as reported through qualitative data

Another clear Impact Goal might be: "Ensure rape survivors in the military are able to report abuse without fear of retribution." Impact indicators for this goal might include:

- Increases in soldiers' desire to build support for survivors within the military
- New support among lawmakers and military leadership for relevant policies
- Launch of new programs that support survivors who report abuse
- Implementation of new practices that support survivors' ability to safely report abuse

What you are doing here is identifying observable data that shows change. Some of the indicators above are more immediate or short term than others, and that's okay. So long as you can clearly trace the role the film plays in the changes that result in your activities, then they belong in your plan.

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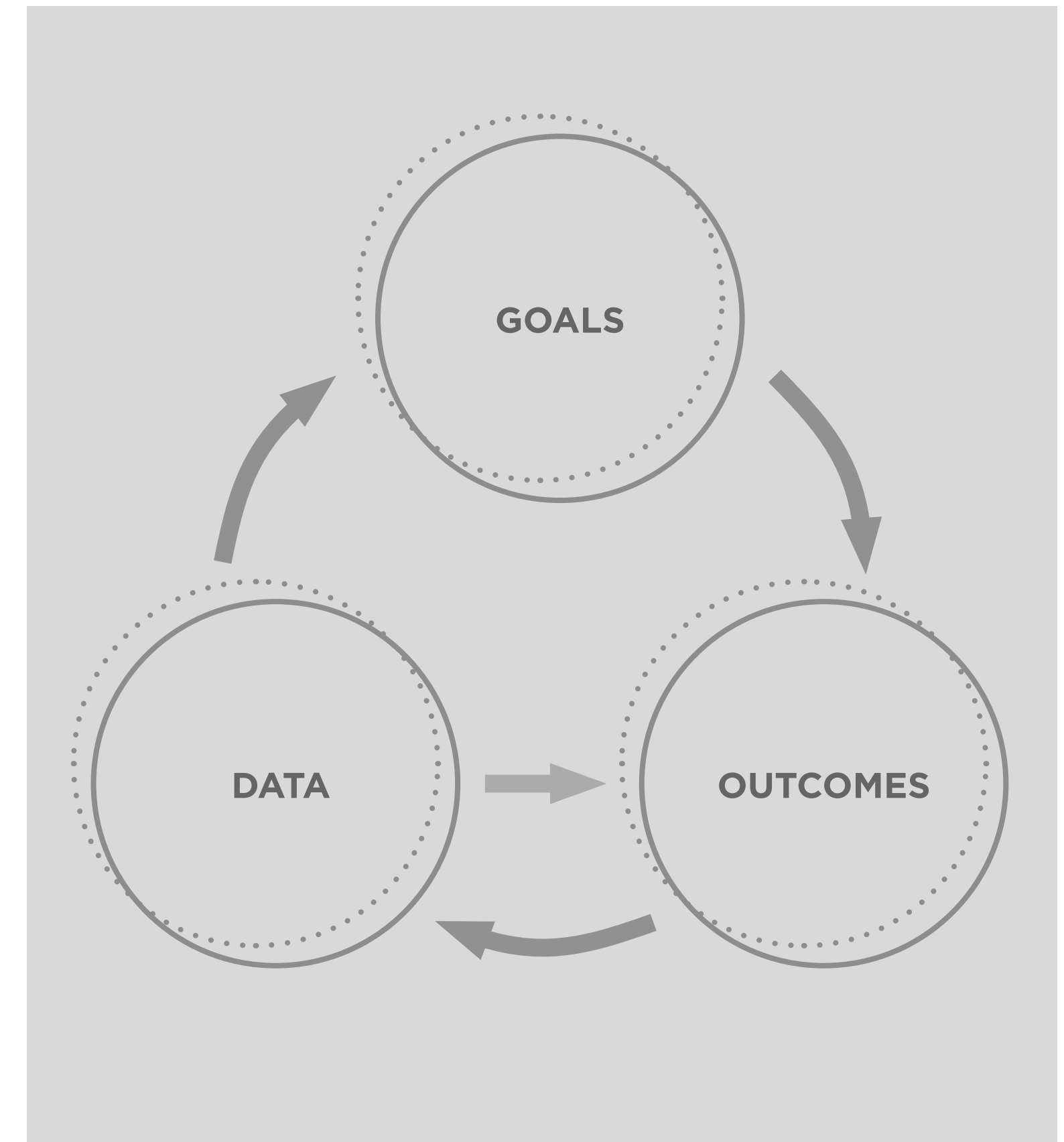
### STEP 3: COLLECT DATA

Now that you know what you're looking for, it's time to figure out what tools or practices can help you find and collect that data. What are the specific methods of data collection you might be able to use to gather data for each of your Impact Goals? You can start with a single piece of data you could collect for each one.

In order to do this, the main thing you'll need to do is have a look through the next section of this chapter, the Evaluation Toolbox. Here we've got the long list of all the ways we know of to collect data. This will help you understand what's possible, so you can then apply it to your own challenges.

For more on identifying impact indicators and collecting data on them, refer to section #3 of the [Deepening Engagement report](#) (pages 18-28).

Because learning is such a big part of evaluation and impact assessment, what you end up with is ideally a feedback loop. The data you collect helps you to see the role your film is playing with respect to the issues it addresses, which helps you refine your goals and/or the outcomes you're aiming for, which helps you refine the data you collect, and so forth.



Now you're ready to start collecting evidence.

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

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## Further reading

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**Center for Media & Social Impact, “Assessing the Social Impact of Issues-Focused Documentaries: Research Methods & Considerations for the Future”**

[www.cmsimpact.org/media-impact/related-materials/documents/assessing-social-impact-issues-focused-documentaries](http://www.cmsimpact.org/media-impact/related-materials/documents/assessing-social-impact-issues-focused-documentaries)

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**ALSO CHECK OUT THESE VALUABLE TEXTS ON EVALUATION:**

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**Overview and assessment of the approaches being employed in assessing media impact**

[learcenter.org/pdf/measuringmedia.pdf](http://learcenter.org/pdf/measuringmedia.pdf)

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**Impact Case Study for *Food Inc.***

[thestateofsie.com/johanna-blakley-social-impact-entertainment-measure-quantify](http://thestateofsie.com/johanna-blakley-social-impact-entertainment-measure-quantify)  
Social impact entertainment can be an incredible force for change. However, for that change to be quantified and proven, it's essential we understand how to measure impact, explains Johanna Blakley.

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**Case study for *Chasing Ice***

[thestateofsie.com/samantha-wright-micro-targeting-viewers-chasing-ice-chasing-coral](http://thestateofsie.com/samantha-wright-micro-targeting-viewers-chasing-ice-chasing-coral)  
From changing minds in Ohio to capturing the attention of world leaders at the UN — Samantha Wright walks us through the evolution of impact across *Chasing Ice* and *Chasing Coral*.

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**Artist and scientist Heidi Boisvert wrestles with the question, “If you can design a tool (to measure the neuroscience of pop culture), but it can be turned into a weapon, should you build it?”**

[popcollab.org/heidi-boisvert-futureperfect-lab-the-ethics-of-button-pushing](http://popcollab.org/heidi-boisvert-futureperfect-lab-the-ethics-of-button-pushing)

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**This study examines and analyzes a policy audience response to an online screening of *The Homestretch*, an independent documentary film about homeless youth in the American education system using the OVEE platform.**

[cmsimpact.org/resource/connecting-audiences-ovee-online-screening-platform-assessment-homestretch-pbs-documentary](http://cmsimpact.org/resource/connecting-audiences-ovee-online-screening-platform-assessment-homestretch-pbs-documentary)





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## MEASUREMENT TOOLBOX

Hopefully by now you have an idea of what you want to measure or evaluate, and now you need to figure out how to get it done. In this section you'll find an ample list of tools that you can apply to reach your chosen indicators, along with a deep dive into a time-honoured tool that remains ubiquitous yet often underestimated... the survey.



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If you are tracking impact to meet the requirements of funders and partners, often a rich longitudinal narrative containing anecdotal evidence may be enough. This is great, but we'd also love to share some other techniques borrowed from many disciplines - including newsrooms, marketing, advertising, the arts and social science - which can give a much more profound insight into the power of your film, and provide evidence that you are reaching your impact goals.

Remember — too often, evaluation and impact assessments are driven by telling the funder what they want to know and what they want to hear. But ideally your interest in tracking impact is driven by curiosity and a desire to learn as you go.

To work out what might be right for your project, we've drafted a toolbox of techniques broken down by the four Impact Dynamics:

**CHANGING MINDS**  
**CHANGING BEHAVIOURS**  
**BUILDING COMMUNITIES**  
**CHANGING STRUCTURES**

Some of these tools and techniques are free and easy to set up. Some are expensive and require expert skills. But don't be deterred. Even if you are cash strapped, you may still be able to secure pro bono support from a PR/marketing firm. You might be able to persuade a polling company to slip a couple of questions on for free at the end of another job. You may be able to collaborate with a PhD student or social sciences department at a university. You'd be surprised how many people might be willing to help.

This toolbox is a work in progress. Indicators and techniques can be applied to multiple dynamics but, as with all of this guide, we think this will give you a good start. If you have more ideas please email us so we can slot them in.



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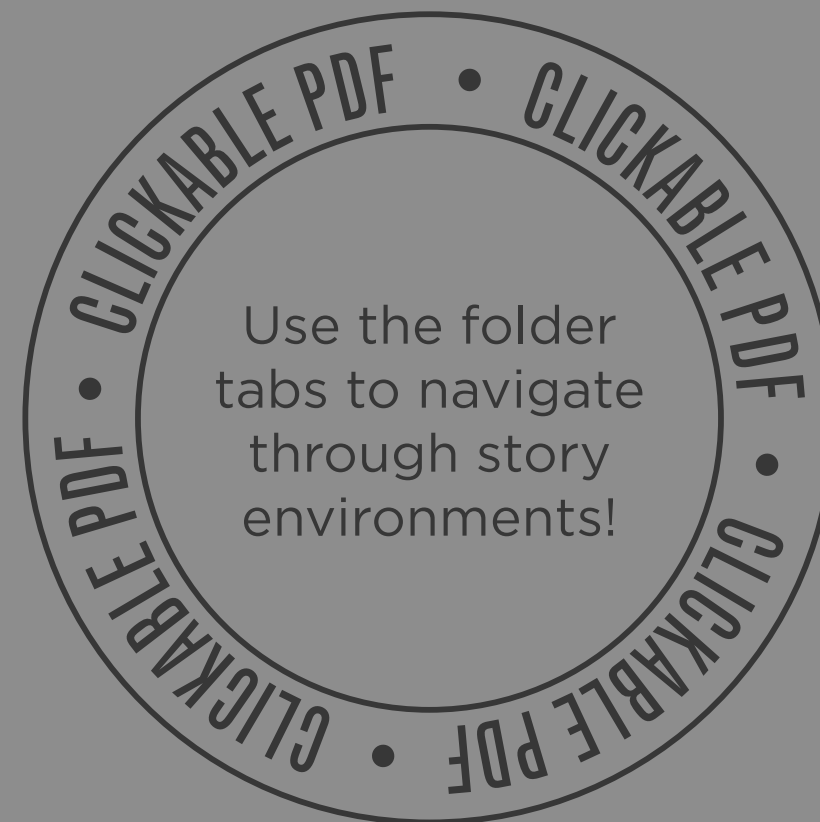
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CHANGING MINDS

CHANGING BEHAVIOURS

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

CHANGING STRUCTURES



# TOOLBOX CHANGING MINDS



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CHANGING MINDS	CHANGING BEHAVIOURS	BUILDING COMMUNITIES	CHANGING STRUCTURES
INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>Evidence of audience engagement with the film and issues *during* screenings of the film that may indicate/illustrate the film's impact on the audience.</b></p>		<p>Event hosts can capture the general mood of events through direct observational reporting on-site, by filling out a standardised template that allows them to report on and compare the same kinds of data across events eg: audience size, questions raised, scenes eliciting a response, etc.</p> <p>You can capture feedback during live events using Harvis <a href="http://www.afourthact.com/harvis">www.afourthact.com/harvis</a>, which is a mobile web app that empowers individuals to share their perspectives and emotional responses to media.</p> <p>You can host a virtual screening on the Ovee platform, which has built-in tools to gather feedback on how viewers are relating to the content in real time as they watch. This fee-for-service ITVS platform except for Independent Lens films, which use it for free.</p>	
<p><b>An improvement of audience attitudes, understanding, intent to take action through data collected *after* screenings of the film.</b></p>		<p>If you have your audiences email addresses, you can always conduct an online questionnaire using a service such as Survey Monkey which is free or Google Forms, which is also free.</p> <p>Qualtrics is an example of a pay for service: <a href="http://qualtrics.com">qualtrics.com</a></p> <p>Maintain unsolicited letters, emails, phone calls, or notes on conversations related to the film.</p> <p>Event hosts can use comment cards and/or video record reactions outside the event space to capture audience reflections and quotes.</p>	



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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>An improvement of audience attitudes, understanding, intent to take action through data collected *after* screenings of the film. <i>Continued.</i></b></p>		<p>Audience members fill out entry/exit surveys at physical screenings to help hosts assess changes in viewer knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours around the issues in question. Be sure to survey them again in 12 months to learn what has stuck.</p> <p>Propensity Score Matching: Assess levels of viewer knowledge, attitudes and behaviours on an issue. Examine and compare people who did see your film with those who did not. Or with those who saw a different film on a similar topic.</p>	
<p><b>You may be able to demonstrate that the film and film campaign reached a greater % of target audience reached compared to alternative strategies.</b></p>		<p>Partner orgs might be able to share target audiences reached by comparative projects or comparative investments - including publishing research or paying for advertisements.</p>	
<p><b>Improvement or other changes in public opinion on the issues that result from the film and campaign activities.</b></p>		<p>Commission a survey of public opinion via independent agency such as Nielsen or Gallop around the issue, before film's release and repeat after a period for comparison.</p> <p>Examine and compare people who did see your film with those who did not.</p> <p>Another more cost effective technique which can give you one data point is to commission a question through</p>	



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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>Improvement or other changes in public opinion on the issues that result from the film and campaign activities.</b> <i>Continued.</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Increase in public awareness of the issues that result from the film and campaign activities.</b></p>		<p>an Omnibus Poll. Some pollsters such as ComRes will offer a charity rate for appropriate projects.</p> <p>If you can't afford an agency, try out Google Surveys.</p> <p>Or consider commissioning an SMS poll <a href="https://www.smspoll.net">smspoll.net</a></p> <hr/> <p>Track the volume of press articles linking the film to issues raised (not just film reviews but analysis and discussion), which could indicate a new trend.</p> <p>Run Google Alerts for press coverage or Google Trends to show how an issue trends over time. Correlating against release period of film and major campaign initiatives.</p> <p>With more funding you could hire a media agency for press evaluation providing Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) and PR value — a proxy to the number of people likely to have seen an advert or read an article on an issue. This is a standardised tool but not seen as very accurate.</p> <p>Try PageOneX which tracks, code, and visualise major news stories based on the proportion of newspaper front pages that they take up. <a href="https://www.pageonex.com">pageonex.com</a></p> <p>Online services are available which offer global media monitoring and analytics such as Meltwater <a href="https://www.meltwater.com">meltwater.com</a> or Cision <a href="https://www.cision.com/uk">cision.com/uk</a></p>	



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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>Changes in how the issues are framed in mass media that are associated with the film and impact campaign. By celebrities, influencers and amplifiers. And also thought leaders, government officials &amp; academics.</b></p>		<p>Try Sentiment Analysis. Available tools include <a href="https://www.rankspeed.com">rankspeed.com</a> a search tool that does a sentiment analysis on the blogosphere / twittersphere. A service also provided by <a href="https://www.trackur.com">trackur.com</a> and <a href="https://www.altmetric.com">altmetric.com</a>. Monitor the update of issue, frames, language or characters by thought leaders, celebrities, government officials, academics etc.</p> <p>Look at news archives. And consider tools such as Media Cloud: <a href="https://www.mediacloud.org">mediacloud.org</a> examine how the network public sphere reflect public debate and discourse about key issues; examine a film in relation to the discourse around a key issue.</p> <p>Other examples are Story Pilot by Harmony Institute and ConText by University of Illinois.</p>	
<p><b>Change in standing of leading advocates in the media space or creation of new advocates - including subjects of films or filmmakers themselves.</b></p>		<p>Review and track how leading advocates are talking about the issues through online and other research (news, public releases, interviews etc.) that are associated with the film and impact campaign.</p>	
<p><b>A rise in online traffic to your films website or campaign website may provide basic evidence of growing engagement.</b></p>		<p>Use Google Analytics for detailed stats about visitors to your campaign website.</p>	





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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>More engaged users, as evidenced by analysis of the habits of those visitors to to your films website or campaign website may provide basic evidence of growing engagement.</b> <i>For example the numbers of new visitors ( demonstrating a growing audience) / traffic sources or referrals (which might indicate whether you are reaching reaching target audiences) / page views (which could be an indicator of levels of engagement).</i></p>		<p>Use Google Analytics for detailed stats about visitors to your campaign website.</p> <p>Have a look at 'action' based analytics like Mixpanel <a href="https://mixpanel.com">mixpixel.com</a> or KISSMetrics <a href="https://kissmetrics.com">kissmetrics.com</a></p>	
<p><b>The growth of your email list as well as the open rate of newsletters over the duration of the film impact campaign may provide evidence of growing engagement.</b></p>		<p>Track within your email programme such as MailChimp <a href="https://mailchimp.com">mailchimp.com</a>, or you could use Campaign Monitor <a href="https://campaignmonitor.com">campaignmonitor.com</a> or Assemble <a href="https://assemble.me">assemble.me</a></p>	
<p><b>Deeper or more significant focus on the issues raised in the film by influencers and amplifiers and through transmedia engagement.</b></p>		<p>Try out Facebook insights. Here is a great starter guide from Mashable <a href="https://mashable.com/2010/09/03/facebook-insights-guide/#A1QHb3tYmiq7">mashable.com/2010/09/03/facebook-insights-guide/#A1QHb3tYmiq7</a></p> <p>For managing multiple social media accounts try Hootsuite <a href="https://hootsuite.com">hootsuite.com</a> or Quantcast <a href="https://quantcast.com">quantcast.com</a> — providing worldwide audience and demographic data for websites, videos, widgets, blogs etc.</p> <p><a href="https://hashtracking.com">hashtracking.com</a> can provide real and historic hashtag intelligence. Try free tool <a href="https://sharedcount.com">sharedcount.com</a> to get a sample conversation.</p>	



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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p>Deeper or more significant focus on the issues raised in the film by influencers and amplifiers and through transmedia engagement. <i>Continued.</i></p>		<p>Track the creation of new media content triggered by the film and impact campaign: for example newly commissioned programming or extended news reports to sit around the film.</p> <p>Try a search tool that does a sentiment analysis on the blogosphere / twittersphere like <a href="https://trackur.com">trackur.com</a> or <a href="https://burrrd.com">burrrd.com</a></p> <p>Or a service like Crimson Hexagon which can track conversations and measure sentiment on a variety of social networks <a href="https://crimsonhexagon.com">crimsonhexagon.com</a>.</p>	



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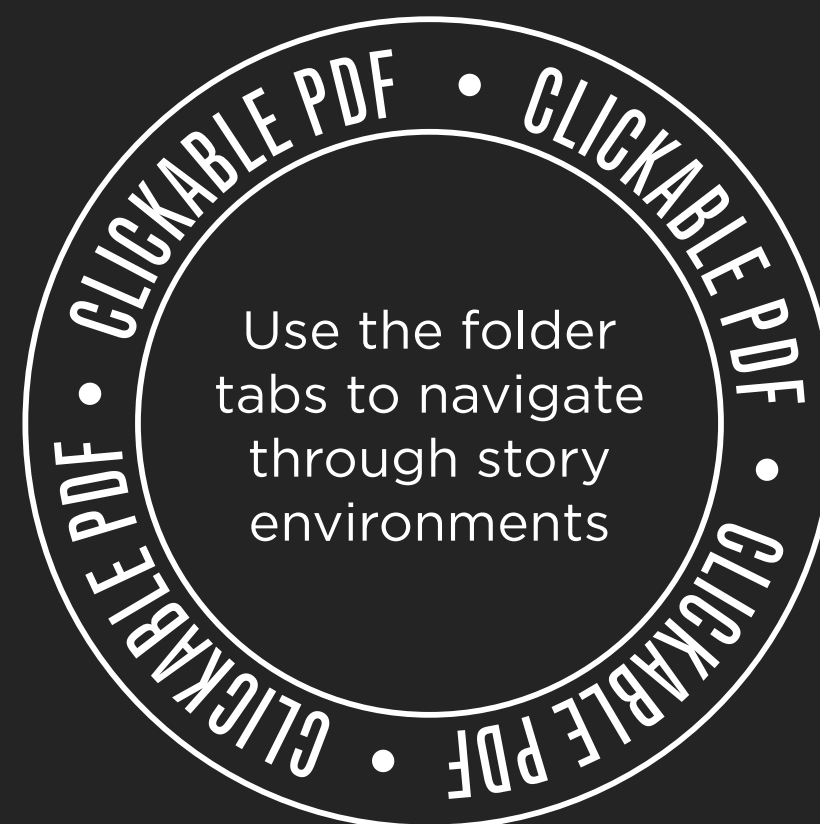
6.7 WRAPPING UP

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# TOOLBOX CHANGING BEHAVIOURS



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<b>INDICATOR</b>		<b>TOOL/TECHNIQUE</b>	
<b>A rise in the numbers of signatures on a pledge or petition associated with the film campaign.</b>		Partners may be able to share data. Or else it might be captured on <a href="https://www.avaaz.org">Avaaz.org</a> or <a href="https://www.350.org">350.org</a> . Note that Google Analytics offers extensive documentation on how to track various metrics, with easy-to-implement page code and relatively easy event tracking, which can be especially useful for action KPIs such as form completions or donations.	
<b>A surge in letter writing associated with the messages of the film campaign.</b>		Partners may be able to share data or may be reported in the press.	
<b>An increase in fundraising or donations for a given partner organisation.</b>		Partners may be able to share data. Also try Google analytics (see above).	
<b>An Increase in membership for a given partner organisation.</b>		Partners may be able to share data.	
<b>An Increase in volunteering for a given partner organisation.</b>		Partners may be able to share data.	
<b>Attendance at live event or gathering for protest associated with the film campaign.</b>		Partners may be able to share data. Plus evidence from news orgs.	
<b>Increase in requests for information or for referrals to services associated with the film campaign.</b>		Partners may be able to share data. Note: This can be an affordable way to gather compelling data, but it requires up-front preparation to identify and agree on the right metrics and to establish baseline performance, as well as commitment from partners to track and provide the information.	



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<b>INDICATOR</b>		<b>TOOL/TECHNIQUE</b>	
<b>A lawsuit is filed which is associated with the films campaign.</b>		News analysis. Court reports. Evidence from partners.	
<b>Change in purchasing behaviour which is associated with the films campaign.</b>		Sales analytics or Survey. This could be national or targeted ie: Street intercept survey of target community.	
<b>Change in voting behaviour which is associated with the films campaign.</b>		Review public records or conduct a survey which makes a direct link to the film. This could be national or targeted ie: street intercept survey of target community.	
<b>Change in social behaviour which is associated with the films campaign.</b>		Review public records or conduct a survey which makes a direct link to the film. This could be national or targeted ie: street intercept survey of target community. Or field observation of target community over time.	
<b>Target audiences report changes in behaviour or *intent to* change behaviour”.</b>		<p>Distribute/collect post-screening surveys that include a question about the audience’s intent to change their behaviour. See next section on drafting surveys.</p> <p>Commission Qualitative surveying. Survey targeted focus groups and repeat with same sample after 12 months to track longitudinal behaviour change.</p> <p>Quantative surveying in general population. Commission a survey of pulic behaviour via indepedendent agency such as Neilson or Gallop around the issue, before films release and repeat after a period for comparison. Could also be verified in Public Records.</p>	



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<b>INDICATOR</b>		<b>TOOL/TECHNIQUE</b>	
<p><b>General population reports change in behaviour.</b></p>		<p>You might also use Behaviour Measurement Tool <a href="https://behaviourtool.strikingly.com">behaviourtool.strikingly.com</a></p> <p>Also try out Google Surveys <a href="https://google.com/insights/consumersurveys/home">google.com/insights/consumersurveys/home</a></p>	
<p><b>Individual narratives of transformation.</b></p>		<p>Biographical / longitudinal study of how people's lives are transformed by participating in the film production / outreach process.</p>	



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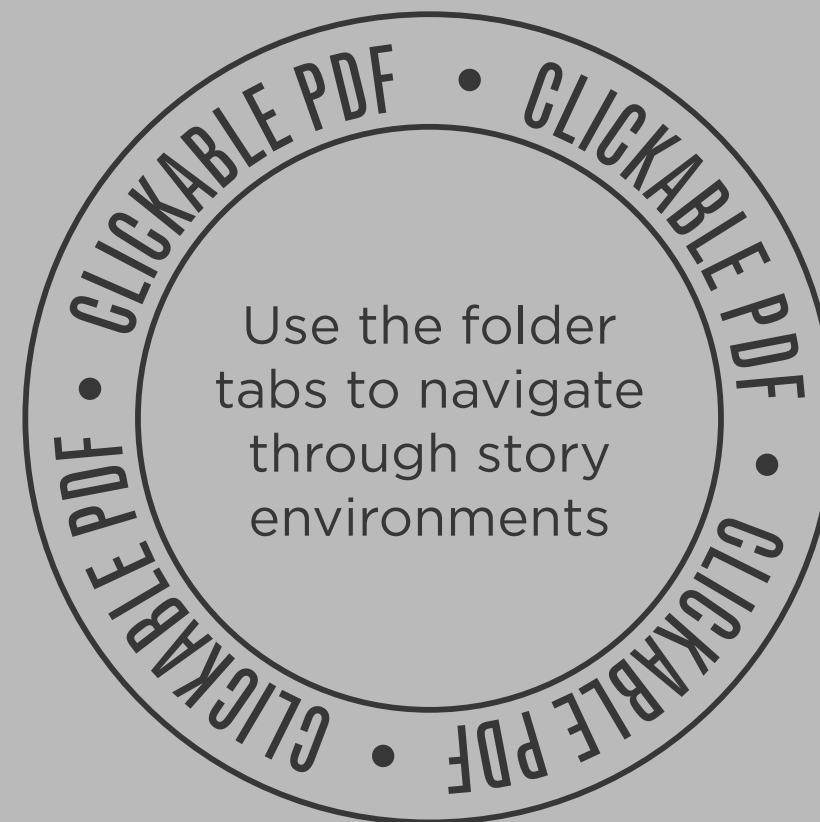
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# TOOLBOX BUILDING COMMUNITIES



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CHANGING MINDS	CHANGING BEHAVIOURS	BUILDING COMMUNITIES	CHANGING STRUCTURES
INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>Partner organisations reporting the value of the film in advancing their goals and using it in their campaigns (the tool/technique) may be indication of the film's utility to the social movements they are a part of.</b></p> <p><i>For example: a rise in membership of grassroots organisations and a strengthened base of support triggered by the film and impact campaign</i></p>		<p>Partners may be able to share data. Possibly measured through enrollment, membership rosters, anecdotes, or other relevant data.</p> <p><i>Partners may be able to share data. Measured through enrollment and membership rosters.</i></p> <p><i>Partners may be able to share data.</i></p> <p><i>Partners may be able to share data. Record from news organisations.</i></p>	
<p><b>A rise in volunteering in the partner organisations triggered by the film and impact campaign.</b></p>		<p>Partners may be able to share data. Measured through enrollment and membership rosters.</p>	
<p><b>An increase in calls or referrals to community services triggered by the film and impact campaign.</b></p>		<p>Partners may be able to share data.</p>	
<p><b>A rise in attendance at organised community meetings or protests due to the film or film campaign.</b></p>		<p>Partners may be able to share data. Record from news organisations.</p>	
<p><b>Legal action filed by community groups due to film and impact campaign.</b></p>		<p>News analysis. Lawsuit records.</p>	
<p><b>Surge in fundraising or donations to community organisations associated with the film or the film's issues.</b></p>		<p>Partners may be able to share data.</p>	
<p><b>Leadership development in the community as triggered by the film: meaning those who can facilitate policy change are identified, engaged, and commit to change.</b></p>		<p>Demonstrated through biographical evidence. Testimony from campaign partners. Interviews and press.</p>	





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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
New collaborations between community or grassroots organisations inspired by the film and film campaign, uniting around common policy goals and outcomes.		Testimony from campaign partners. Interviews, review of minutes. Press releases.	
Formation of cross disciplinary / cross organisation committees. ie; strengthened coalitions within community organisers.		<p>Number and frequency of meetings and information sharing opportunities. Interviews, progress reports, meeting minutes.</p> <p>Formal agreements for sharing information and responsibilities. Partner organisations collaborate/ advocate on common policy goals and outcomes. Evidenced through MOU / contract. Meeting minutes. Press releases.</p> <p>Try Issue Crawler, the network visualisation tool. <a href="http://issuecrawler.net">issuecrawler.net</a>, is used by NGOs and other researchers to answer questions about specific networks and effective networking more generally.</p>	
A shift in organisation and strengthened organisational capacity triggered by the film and impact campaign.		Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool / Self Assessment Spider Diagram.	
Awards granted to orgs/ individuals featured prominently in the film and campaign.		Partners to share details. Press releases or news reporting.	
The creation of new political advocates due to the film and impact campaign.		Review Public Record and press to capture quotes by politicians / lawmakers that make reference to the film.	



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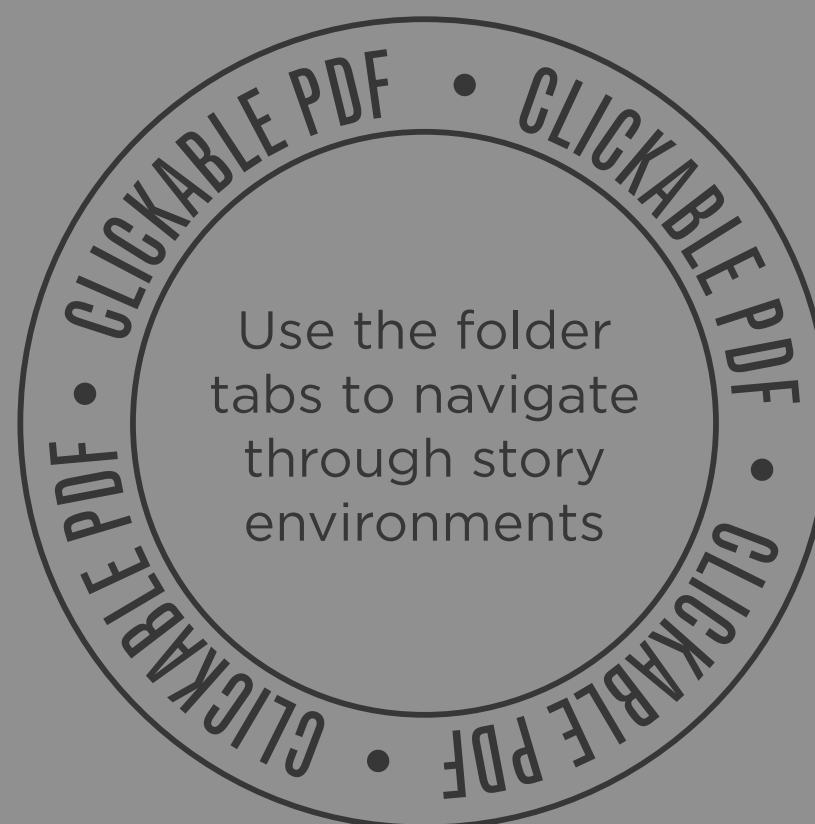
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# TOOLBOX CHANGING STRUCTURES



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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
<p><b>Evidence of screenings, use of the film &amp; associated campaign by advocates are indicators that these groups think the film is useful.</b></p> <p><i>For example screenings in local government / national legislatures / transnational institutions such as UN or EU / major international conferences</i></p>		<p>Press or Public Record for record of events and key quotes and where possible also note key audience members.</p> <p>Also make a forensic record of smaller influencer screenings, note who attended, who spoke and track where this leads.</p>	
<p><b>Increased pressure on elected officials to take up the issue.</b></p>		<p>Lawmakers referring to the film or campaign.</p>	
<p><b>Government policy changes in alignment with campaign goals.</b></p>		<p>Review public record to show when film or film campaign is cited in the amendment or formation of new legislation.</p> <p>Check record of legislative sessions and oversight committees. Tools such are available for tracking political process such as <a href="http://www.opencongress.org">www.opencongress.org</a>.</p> <p>You can also track policy change in Lexus Nexus (which operates with Boolean search terms) for free if someone on your team has an affiliation with a university.</p>	
<p><b>Film / campaign mentioned during court proceedings.</b></p>		<p>Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.</p>	
<p><b>Reversal of legal action associated with the film and impact campaign.</b></p>		<p>Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.</p>	



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INDICATOR		TOOL/TECHNIQUE	
Call for judicial hearing or a public investigation is triggered due to the film and impact campaign.		Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.	
Fine or penalty is levied.		Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.	
Firing/Resignation triggered.		Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.	
Criminal charges are brought .		Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.	
Changes in internal/external marketing campaigns, CSR priorities, new purchasing or sales strategy.		Press announcements or Annual Reviews that cite the film.  Evidence that the Institution stops or starts releasing relevant data.	
Copycat behaviour on amongst competitive institutions in the marketplace.		Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film.	
Changes to corporate bottom line or budget monitoring.		Fiscal press announcements or corporate Annual Reviews that make reference to the film & campaign or that can be otherwise linked to it.  Also reporting from leadership at those institutions.	
Corporate partnerships terminated due to the film and impact campaign.		Press or Public Record that makes reference to the film as well as reporting from leadership at those institutions.	



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### HOW TO CREATE A GOOD SURVEY:

It may be that you want to understand how audiences are relating to your film: what they learned, how it shifted their perceptions or attitudes, what it inspired. If that is the case, a survey or poll will be a powerful tool for you. Surveys make it easy to track shifts in attitudes, awareness or behaviours across a range of audiences and over time.

The primary question for your team is: what is the information you are looking for and want? Are you curious about what lessons varied audiences take away from a film? And if so, why do you want to know this? Do you plan to edit the film further? Or are you using the feedback to refine your impact strategy? Do you want to know if the film has the capacity to move people towards specific actions? If so, great. Be sure to account for different event designs or facilitators, since you are not just measuring the impact of the film but also the effectiveness of the event itself.

There are other watch-outs too. A long, badly designed survey can confuse more than enlighten, and even irritate your audience. They are also time consuming for the film team, so make sure you need one. If all you want to know

is that your film is landing in the way you expected, you may simply need to survey a pilot group. After that, you may not need one. Better to focus your data collection on more important things like action, intent to get involved, etc. Or it may mean you should refine your data collection plan. For example, perhaps you can shorten the survey so that audiences can focus on the questions you are still curious about. Just remember to note the change in your reporting.

There are also more subtle challenges, which are connected with good practice. Here's our 10 step guide to developing a great survey.

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### 1.

#### **Define the audience available for survey**

To state the obvious, screening *The Invisible War* on Capitol Hill is very different to screening *Weapon of War* in a remote community in the Congo, and different again to the audience who sees your film in theatres or downloads it from Netflix. But too often, survey writers of all shades forget to think about who it is they're asking questions of. Write down each audience - then follow the rest of the process for each audience separately. Don't be tempted to try to combine them right until the end, because you'll most likely miss something.

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### 2.

#### **Review your impact goals and understand which are relevant to that audience**

This is where you need your Impact Evaluation Plan again. Go back to it, and filter it for goals that are relevant to the audience.

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### 3.

#### Brainstorm a list of questions

Starting from each of your impact goals, generate a first draft list of questions for that audience. What would you love to know? Don't try to make these questions perfect at this point - we're coming to that...

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### 4.

#### Do the 'So What?' test

Now you've got a first list of questions, it's time to do the 'So What?' test. You've got a list of what you'd like to know - now what do you need to know? How will the answers help you? Try to keep it short. Ideally, your survey won't take anyone longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Remember, every additional question you ask beyond the first few will get less and less thought and attention in response; and it creates more work for you to do in analysing the data. Quantity and quality are in direct competition when it comes to surveys, so whilst you shouldn't give up on the information you genuinely do need and could respond to, if you can get it down to one question, do.

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### 5.

#### What's the baseline?

It's all very well saying that people are likely to do, say, or feel something after watching your film. But unless you know whether they were already likely to do it before watching, you can't claim any impact on that. That's why baselines matter. There are a few ways to achieve this:

— You could try contacting researchers working in the

specialist area of your film to see what data they have already collected before the release of the movie. And see if there is an opportunity to repeat the original study post impact campaign.

- You can try to get some idea of a comparison with a broader group of which your audience is a subset. So-called "omnibus" ("for everyone") studies enable this by getting questions out to a group (usually 1000 people) that is representative of the nation as a whole, usually for under \$1000 per question. If the audience at your film say something different to your baseline group, you can often use that to point to a difference you've made.

Remember that unless you've enlisted professional evaluators to help you, this methodology can be very tricky because there are so many variables to account for in your comparisons.

- More powerfully, you can do pre and post-screening questions - asking the same question before and after, so the only variable in between is the experience of your film. Of course, even that's not perfect, because they may have read about the film in order to have decided to see it, so your impact may actually have begun before the screening. But it's a good one to consider.
- Even better, if you can get contact details, you can go back to people after a significant period, and find out if they actually acted on intentions formed at the screening and if they are still doing so. This takes out the 'heat of the moment' factor, and is a real test of impact at this level. The problem, of course, is that

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asking people for their details has its own problems – you have to be very sure of where you stand on data protection rules, and asking for data is another question that will take up their attention... so this is a good thing to do, but is best done sparingly.

If you can't capture a baseline, another tactic is to ask audiences to self-assess. In other words, you can ask them how the film shifted their perceptions, feelings, or understanding. It too is imperfect, but perfectly reasonable if you acknowledge your methodology in your reporting.

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## 6. Check for two-in-one

What often happens when you refine a survey down like this is that you become tempted to bring two questions into one. The alarm words to look out for are 'and' and 'or'.

If *The End of the Line* survey (see case study above) had asked “How likely are you to support political action on Bluefin tuna fishing and seek to buy sustainable fish yourself?”, they might have blurred their information and never have recognised the opportunity they had. These are two questions, not one.

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## 7. Don't lead the witness

You need to be very careful to check the framing of your questions. In the first draft, you will almost definitely be leading your respondents to the answer you want – it's human nature.

Back to *The End of the Line* — if they'd asked “Would you be more likely to buy sustainable fish as a result of watching the film?”, the right answer is clearly “yes” – and people like giving the right answer. Challenge yourself to make it possible to give the answer you don't want.

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## 8. Close the questions

Now you need to make sure that your questions can be answered simply, ideally by checking a box. The bad version of *The End of the Line* question this time would be “What would you be most likely to do differently?”, with an open space for responses to be filled in. This is all very well in some ways, but unless you're asking a lot of people you may not get what you're looking for (the vast majority of open survey questions are left blank). And, even if you get a response, analysing that data is going to be a real headache for you.

The more you can provide options, yes/no questions, and checkboxes (e.g. select one, select your top 3, select all that apply) that include “other (please describe)” and “don't know/not applicable” kinds of options, the more likely you are to get answers, and answers you can use.

All this said, while carefully crafted closed-ended should be the majority of the survey items, it's also ideal to include a maximum of one or two open-ended questions to understand the audience members' experience qualitatively as well.

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## 9. Think about the best medium

At this point, the actual questions should be pretty much

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written. Now you need to think about how to administer the survey – should it be paper-based? SMS? Online?

Some evaluators recommend electronic data collection whenever possible to help with streamlining the flow of data, since paper surveys can be easily lost or misplaced. But it all depends on your audience and digital access. Informing change has just put together a full inventory of tools/platforms for online data collection, available here: [informingchange.com/cat-resources/survey-platforms](https://informingchange.com/cat-resources/survey-platforms)

If you can get it down to a single question, or three at most, SMS might well be a good option. Data gathered this way is easily analysed, and people are often very willing to text an answer quickly - you may even be able to follow up and gain permission to use their contact details on an ongoing basis. There are a wide variety of platforms that offer this functionality for free, with the most popular in the United States being [Poll Everywhere](#). Even the popular Mailchimp platform offers a free “text to join email list” function. And with mobile phones now widely used across the world, there are ways of doing this almost everywhere if you do your research. Again, just be conscious of your audience and both cost and access to mobile and other technologies.

Online survey tools like [Survey Monkey](#) and Survey Gizmo are also widely available (and can be mobile-optimised for access by smartphone). These platforms also often have the benefit of making data collection, analysis, data visualisation and even reporting relatively painless. The challenge, of course, is that only people sufficiently motivated to go to the site to register their views will fill in your survey, which can create a major bias in your data towards people who care. If you can afford it, offering

some sort of incentive (a downloadable voucher or similar) can help overcome this.

Sometimes though, you can't actually beat an old-fashioned paper-based survey. The difficulty is analysis, since you don't want to spend hours going through responses, but there are relatively low-cost hard and software solutions (for example, [autodata.com](https://autodata.com)) that can take the pain out of this.

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## 10.

### **Pilot test it - check the language**

Whatever you do, always, always, always test it before you go live. You will have done something that makes it not quite work. Whatever questions and whatever medium you decide upon, get 10 friends to try it out first, and ideally try it out at a rough cut screening too before you commit to it fully. The pain and cost of knowing the data that's coming in won't be usable, or of trying to change something when it's up and running, is seriously worth avoiding.

### **NEED MORE HELP?**

The nature of our work is that there are always people willing to help, and there are plenty of people who design this kind of thing for a living – whether in marketing or research agencies, or in the social sciences departments of universities, including the [Media Impact Project](#) at the University of Southern California Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Evaluation firms include [Harmony Labs](#), [Impact Architects](#), [Informing Change](#), and [Learning for Action](#). Often, getting their help (particularly the latter) can add credibility to what you do as well – so ask around your friends, partners, funders and supporters, and get help.

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Celebrating winners of the Doc Impact Award — for more information go to [docimpacthi5.org](https://docimpacthi5.org)



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# Geek out

## Further reading

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#### National Center for Media Engagement: Assessment Tools

[ht.ly/v8nG6](https://ht.ly/v8nG6)

NCME provides a useful collection of social impact assessment methods, including some practical tools.

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#### A Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Companion to “A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy”

[racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/a\\_handbook\\_of\\_data\\_collection\\_tools.pdf](https://racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/a_handbook_of_data_collection_tools.pdf)

This handbook of data collection tools by Organisational Research Services has examples of practical tools and processes for collecting useful information from policy and advocacy efforts.

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#### Social Justice Documentary: Designing for Impact

[centerforsocialmedia.org/sites/default/files/documents/pages/designing\\_for\\_impact.pdf](https://centerforsocialmedia.org/sites/default/files/documents/pages/designing_for_impact.pdf)

This working paper examines state-of-the-art methodologies for strategic design and evaluation of social issue documentaries. The report’s recommendations are informed by lessons from case studies of six films.

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#### Assessing the Social Impact of Issues-Focused Documentaries

[cmsimpact.org/media-impact/related-materials/documents/assessing-social-impact-issues-focused-documentaries](https://cmsimpact.org/media-impact/related-materials/documents/assessing-social-impact-issues-focused-documentaries)

A recent white paper from the Center for Media & Social Impact outlines research methods for impact evaluation.

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#### Johanna Blakley — Movies for a Change

[tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxPhoenix-Johanna-Blakley-Mov](https://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxPhoenix-Johanna-Blakley-Mov)

For a masterclass on survey design, check out Johanna Blakley’s TED talk on *Food, Inc.*

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#### Center for Media & Social Impact, “Assessing the Social Impact of Issues-Focused Documentaries: Research Methods & Considerations for the Future”

[cmsimpact.org/media-impact/related-materials/documents/assessing-social-impact-issues-focused-documentaries](https://cmsimpact.org/media-impact/related-materials/documents/assessing-social-impact-issues-focused-documentaries)



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## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**S**o here we are! By now you're hopefully seeing the value and possibilities that open up when you track the impact of your efforts. We've talked about how best to do that and using the learnings to strengthen your efforts. We've addressed the importance of being honest about what you want to know and your capacity as a team, and designing your evaluation plan from that place. We've also looked at each impact dynamic and the various tools and indicators to help you track what's happening for each. In this section we offer a couple of examples of what it can look like when you pull it all together.



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**TAKE YOUR PLACE: AN IN-HOUSE EVALUATIVE APPROACH**

*A Place at the Table*, by Lori Silverbush and Kristi Jacobson, is a film about the epidemic of concurrent hunger and obesity in communities across the U.S. To track the impact of their efforts around the film, Active Voice Lab received a grant to explore various assessment methods, co-designed by an in-house evaluator and their How Do We Know/Learn? advisors. Importantly, they were able to collect baseline information - essential for determining what, precisely, changed as a result of using a documentary. Additionally, having an evaluator in-house allowed the impact strategy and assessment to inform one another from the start (remember the feedback loop above?)

The in-house evaluator was able to be present for important strategy and implementation discussions, and as a result was able to identify in real-time how new understandings about the context in which community partners were working was influencing shifts in program strategy - and, in turn, what implications these shifts had for the evaluation. In other words, Active Voice's program and evaluation teams, working closely together, were able to course-correct along the way.

For example, the initial design included engaging organic food advocates, but early inquiries revealed a significant gap between their priorities and those of the hunger/obesity advocates.

In conversations with partners, the impact team came to understand that while anti-hunger and obesity advocates faced similar institutional obstacles, they rarely worked together.

So, they decided to use the film to pull stakeholders together for community-based discussion and planning that could be tailored to the different needs that each organisation and community faced. The resulting strategic plan included a series of braintrusts (small cross-sector planning meetings) and screenings with local organisations in 24 cities across the country. The aim was to use these activities to ignite a common, system-based analysis and spur action around solutions.

The evaluation plan called for data collection and three distinct points in the campaign over the course of a year: 1-2 weeks before a screening to gather baseline data, 2-3 weeks after the screening, and 6-7 months after the screening. The data included surveys from audience members and community hosts at each point in time (as well as application data from host organisations), surveys of community partners at two points in time (pre and post-screening), as well as interviews with community hosts. In addition, data was collected from individuals who received information about the film but did not actually see it; these evaluation participants served as a comparison group for the audience level outcomes analysis. Doing so allowed them to track progress and point to a few distinct outcomes. The data showed that their efforts led to:

- **Increased awareness** of the direct relationship between hunger and obesity among 4 out of 5 audience members.
- **Attitudinal shifts** among 40% of audiences who said they were more supportive of federal government responsibility to address hunger and obesity

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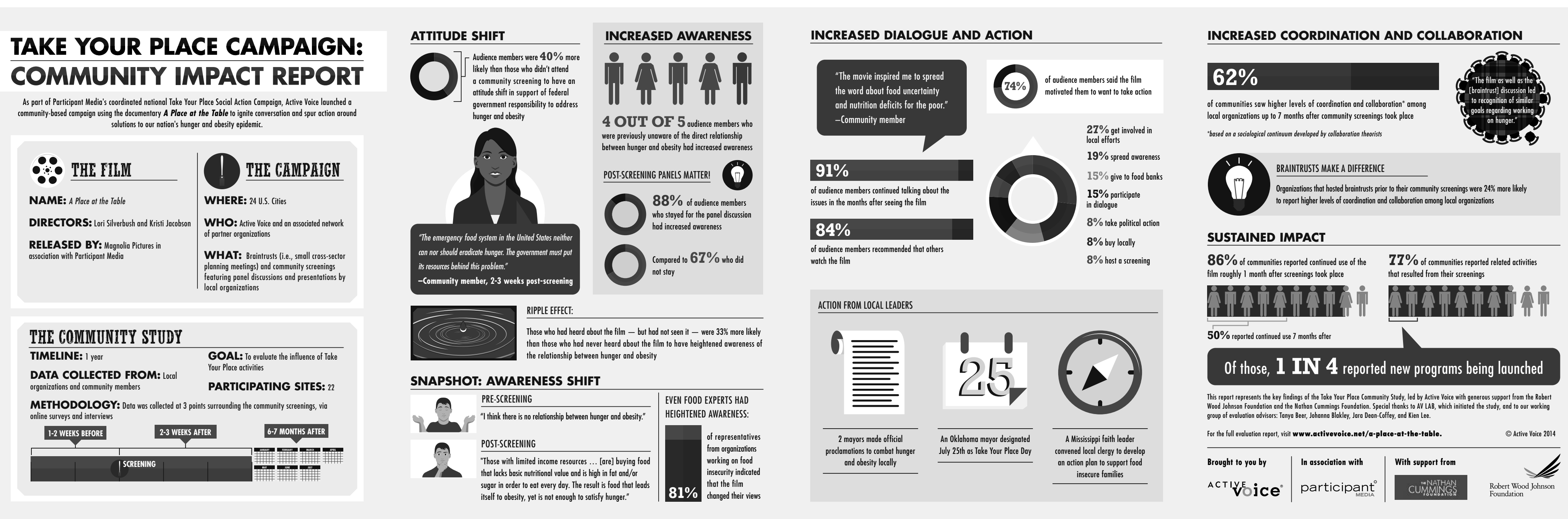
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- **Increased discussion** about the issues continued among 91% of audience members in the months after seeing the film
- **Increased coordination** and collaboration among local organisations that continued in 62% of communities up to 7 months after the screenings took place
- **New activities** in 77% of communities after the screening, including new programs.

Check out this infographic, which lays it all out. As you can see, the team had a clear vision of impact from the start, and an evaluation plan that informed their strategy and allowed them to track exactly what they needed to know and only what they needed to know, allowing them to make statements about the impact of the campaign that was backed by data.





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***HUNTING GROUND AUSTRALIA:*  
TARGETED IMPACT TRACKING**

From the start, the impact team for Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's *The Hunting Ground* knew they had limited capacity for evaluating their efforts. So, they had to be smart about how they used their resources.

When the film arrived in Australia, after a successful run in the U.S., most university vice-chancellors contended that sexual violence was not a problem on their campus in the way that it was in the U.S., even though the impact team's early research and discussion with experts in gendered violence indicated that many of the issues raised in the film were also relevant in the Australian context. So, the Australian impact team set out to use the film as a catalyst for the sector, to build pressure for a baseline survey on the prevalence of campus sexual violence, and to learn more about the Australian context.

The team produced screening support materials and how-to host guides; developed specific "working with media" fact sheets for student representatives, survivor-victims and journalists writing about sexual assault; and adapted the US education materials and Action Toolkit for the Australian context. Their strategy also included the development of the Australian Human Rights Centre's good practice for universities, *On Safe Ground* (2017), the commissioning of a sex and ethics education module for use in university contexts, running a campus screening program, and forming the relationships, coordination, and leadership needed to address campus sexual violence. These activities were in and of themselves impressive and promising.

The team also worked with the Australian Human Rights Commission, National Union of Students, and Universities Australia to set up a first-ever baseline survey of campus sexual assault and sexual harassment, undertaken by students nationally across all campuses, resulting in the *Change The Course* (2017) report.

To measure the impact of their efforts, they knew they needed to track the following indicators:

- Student reactions to the screenings and resulting activities (from a desire to take action to increased understanding of the issue) by way of monitoring questions and exit surveys
- University requests for screenings for staff and students (indicating a new willingness to have the conversation and listen to student responses about their experiences on campus)
- University and college uptake of Sex, Safety and Respect training programs
- Implementation of new policies as recommended by the findings of the nationwide survey (as outlined in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* report and the Australian Human Rights Centre's *On Safe Ground* report).

Altogether, the team hosted 70 campus screenings in 33 of Australia's 39 universities where they tracked these indicators. They also worked with student leaders in conferences and national meetings where the film was used to influence the behaviour of their peers and



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campus culture. Through straight-forward but consistent event observation and communications with university partners, they were able to show that these events led to:

— Increased student and university leader interest in issues raised in the film, including:

- university policies and procedures
- available data on incidents of assault
- available support for survivors and preventative measures in place
- understanding consent

— Independent reviews of student experiences of sexual assault in some university colleges

— The introduction of new sexual assault policies on campuses

— A massive increase in the number of university residences implementing or improving sexual violence prevention training, and utilising a sexual assault service in delivery of that training

Their theory of change suggested that mobilising student interest and engaging institutional leadership would lead to new initiatives, practices, and campus cultures. Their progress on campus policy changes to date suggests they may be right!

It's worth remembering that the campaign included a national broadcast on ABC2, community screenings, conference screenings and more. So, the impact of the team's efforts went much further than the above.

Read the yearly progress reports and university case studies from *The Hunting Ground Australia Project* here:

**GEEK OUT**  
IDEAS FOR FURTHER READING

And look out for the evaluation report that will wrap up the three years of activities undertaken by the impact team, and show where the baton has been taken up by two community-based organisations who have partnered with the film over the campaign.

There are many more impact reports in the **library** to peruse. But don't take our word for it... why not take a look for yourself?

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## Further reading

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**Progress reports and university case studies from *The Hunting Ground Australia Project***

[www.thehuntinggroundaustralia.com.au/australian-reports](http://www.thehuntinggroundaustralia.com.au/australian-reports)

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**DocSCALE: A Mobile Platform for Participatory Evaluation and Collaborative Filtering to Measure Impact of Documentary Film**

[cdn.itvs.org/WGLG\\_DocSCALE\\_WhitePaper.pdf](http://cdn.itvs.org/WGLG_DocSCALE_WhitePaper.pdf)

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**Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed**

[amazon.com/Getting-Maybe-How-World-Changed/dp/067931444X/](http://amazon.com/Getting-Maybe-How-World-Changed/dp/067931444X/)

Frances Westley applies the insights of complexity theory drawing on real examples to examine effective change making.

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**Avoiding 'death by evaluation'**

[hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluationexchange/issue-archive/evaluatingeducation-reform/avoiding-unwarranteddeath-by-evaluation](http://hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluationexchange/issue-archive/evaluatingeducation-reform/avoiding-unwarranteddeath-by-evaluation)

Lois-ellin Datta outlines the common pitfalls, misconceptions and misuses of evaluation.

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**Evaluation a booming business but is it adding value**

[docin.com/p-433547806.html](http://docin.com/p-433547806.html)

Professor Frans Leeuw of Law, Public Policy and Social Science Research at the University of Maastricht, looks at how and whether reductionism is a threat to good evaluation.

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**Philanthropy, Evaluation, Accountability, and Social Change**

[giarts.org/sites/default/files/conference\\_websites/2010/docs/Bare-John\\_Philanthropy-Evaluation-Accountability-Social-Change.pdf](http://giarts.org/sites/default/files/conference_websites/2010/docs/Bare-John_Philanthropy-Evaluation-Accountability-Social-Change.pdf)

John Bare, for The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, presents a call to action for all working in the social impact sector to expand their evaluation expectations wider in order to evaluate in more powerful ways.

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**Media Impact Assessment and Beyond**

[cmsw.mit.edu/podcast-philip-napolimedia-impact-assessment-and-beyond/](http://cmsw.mit.edu/podcast-philip-napolimedia-impact-assessment-and-beyond/)

Philip Napoli of MIT authored the Norman Lear Center's 'Measuring Media Impact' report. This podcast discusses issues around impact assessment and looks at the key challenges and tensions of standardising impact assessment (1hr 25mins).

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**Civic Tech and Engagement: In Search of a Common Language**

[techpresident.com/news/25261/civictech-and-engagement-search-commonlanguage](http://techpresident.com/news/25261/civictech-and-engagement-search-commonlanguage)

Micah L. Sifry asks what kind of design choices in civic tech maximise particular

characteristics of civic action? What sorts of tools and processes empower users vs aggregators? What choices tend to produce thicker or more long-term kinds of engagement?

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**Women & Girls Lead Global evaluation final report**

[cdn.itvs.org/WGLG\\_Final\\_Evaluation\\_Full\\_Report\\_2018.pdf](http://cdn.itvs.org/WGLG_Final_Evaluation_Full_Report_2018.pdf)

Five year evaluation of the multi-territory, multi-season 'Women Of The World' documentary series by ITVS and supported by USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

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**Impact Playbook: Best Practices for Understanding the Impact of Media**

[https://www.bavc.org/sites/default/files/resource/Impact\\_Playbook.pdf](https://www.bavc.org/sites/default/files/resource/Impact_Playbook.pdf)

Harmony Institute & BAVC share best practices from research, a long lineage of audience outreach & engagement and recent tech developments.

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**ACTivate's online campaign planning tool to help media makers, funders & community leaders design more effective campaigns**

*See Case Study*

This white paper is based on a variety of tools and approaches used through a multi-tiered evaluation of the campaign accompanying Kristi Jacobsen & Lori Silverbush's documentary *A Place At The Table*.



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## WRAPPING UP

**T**his guide is about more than just tools and resources, it's about building community. As with the process of evaluation, we saw an opportunity to learn about how impact happens and to track how films are catalysing social change. That's the impetus behind the case studies that make up our Impact **Library**. We believe that sharing stories of change is inspiring and empowering. This guide is an opportunity for us to learn from each other, to pass on knowledge and equip others in the field.



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If you're embarking on a journey of a social impact documentary, then you're already part of the community. We are learning and producing alongside you, and there is strength in numbers. We want to know what works and what doesn't work. We want to know what inspires your work and what hinders it. We want to know what you're reading and what you're making. We want to know what change you want to see in the world.

So don't hesitate to weigh in. **Your feedback is our priority.**

Your feedback will help to make this a better guide and we will continue to edit and grow these resources to help you along the way. To produce case studies and share stories of change to help inform your work.

As with filmmaking, this guide would not be a reality without an extensive team of partners and thought leaders. Thank you to Sahar Driver, who masterminded the edit of this second edition, to Jon Alexander and Irenie Ekkeshis who worked on the first, the three of whom turned the wisdom of the field into a compelling & useful narrative change toolkit.

Huge love to the filmmakers, the Impact Producers, Impact funders, cultural organisers and academics who contributed generous ideas & thoughtful feedback.

For this second edition, we want to give thanks to; **Brenda Coughlin, Abby Davis, Dina de Veer, Jad Abi-Khalil, Macky Alston, Abigail Anketell-Jones, Lindsay Green Barber, Julia Bacha, Kylie Boltin, Jeffrey Bowers, Caitlin Boyle, Marco Cartolano, Giuliano Cavalli, Sonya Childress, Inti Cordera, Santhosh Daniel, Fiona Dawson, Cristine Platt Dewey, Jo-Jo Ellison, Violet Feng, Deirdre Fishel, Edie Gill Holder, Amelia Hapsari, Lee Hirsch, Will Jenkins, Anita Khanna, Judy Kibinge, Fiona Lawson-Baker, Rachel Lears, Sheila Leddy, Alex Lee, Wendy Levy, John Lightfoot, Kathleen Lingo, Mary Macrae, Ani Mercedes, Molly Murphy, Joanna Natasegara, Ina Pira, Michael Premo, Alice Quinlan, Khushboo Ranka, Larissa Rhodes, Theo Rigby, Flor Rubina, Ellen Schneider, Sydelle Willow Smith, Michèle Stephenson, Fran Sterling, Paulina Suárez, Sandra Tabares-Duque, Jennifer Maytorena Taylor, Poh Si Teng, Ilse van Velzen, Sophy Sivaraman, Lynette Wallworth, Emily Wanja, Banker White, Malinda Wink, Samantha Wright, Pamela Yates, Luis González Zaffaroni, Amy Ziering.**

Plus the team of international reviewers who read the darn thing and made sure it made sense. This included: **Burcu Melekoglu, Caro Macdonald, Daniel Simons, Eirin Gjorv, Eric Juhola, Erin Sorensen, Irene Zabytko, Jamie Goncalves, JoAnne Fishburn, Judy Hatcher, Laura Wilson, Sanjay Rawal, Simone Pero, Tim Horsburgh, Vuslat Karan & Angelica Das.**



**And finally: thank you to you, the reader, for sharing in our belief in the power of social impact film. We salute you. We are big fans of your work.**

The Doc Society Team



Convening of the first Global Impact Producers Assembly in Amsterdam 2017



★ INTRODUCTION

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⚙️ IMPACT IN ACTION

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🎥 MAKING & MOVING SHORTS

📊 MEASURING IMPACT

📖 IMPACT LIBRARY

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# 7.0 IMPACT LIBRARY



# IMPACT LIBRARY

Stand on the shoulders of others —  
be inspired and empowered.

We have drawn extensively from over 60  
impact case studies as featured in this chapter.  
Of course, we also recommend that you watch  
as many of the full films as possible.

All case studies were correct at the time of writing.

We are also always looking to include great new examples.

Please [email us](#) suggestions.





**2016 OBAMA'S AMERICA**



**TRYING TO PREVENT OBAMA'S RE-ELECTION**

Directed by: John Sullivan and Dinesh D'Souza  
Story environment: Familiar

**9.70**



**THE STORY OF A GROUP OF FARMERS FROM WHICH THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT SEIZED AND DESTROYED 70 TONS OF RICE**

Directed by: Victoria Solano  
Story environment: Hidden

**THE ACT OF KILLING**



**FORMER INDONESIAN DEATH-SQUADS ARE CHALLENGED TO RE-ENACT THEIR MASSACRES IN THE CINEMATIC GENRE OF THEIR CHOOSING**

Directed by: Joshua Oppenheimer  
Story environment: Entrenched

**THE AGE OF STUPID**



**A DRAMA-DOC HYBRID ABOUT A MAN LIVING ALONE IN A FUTURE RAVAGED BY CLIMATE CHANGE**

Directed by: Franny Armstrong  
Story environment: Entrenched

**A PLACE AT THE TABLE**



**PEELS BACK THE CURTAIN ON THE PROBLEM OF FOOD INSECURITY IN AMERICA**

Directed by: Kristi Jacobson & Lori Silverbush  
Story environment: Fresh

**AMERICAN PROMISE**



**CHANGING THE FUTURE OF YOUNG BLACK MEN IN THE US EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Directed by: Joe Brewster & Michele Stephenson  
Story environment: Familiar

**AN INSIGNIFICANT MAN**



**ARVIND KEJRIWAL, THE HEAD OF THE COMMON MAN'S PARTY, CONFRONTS THE STATUS QUO OF CORRUPTION IN INDIA POLITICS.**

Directed by: Kushboo Ranka & Vinay Shukla  
Story environment: Entrenched

**AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH**



**AL GORE WARNS CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL**

Directed by: Davis Guggenheim  
Story environment: Hidden

**ARMADILLO**



**THE REALITY OF DANISH SOLDIERS AT WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

Directed by: Janus Metz  
Story environment: Entrenched

**ARMOR OF LIGHT**



**FOLLOWS AN EVANGELICAL MINISTER AND THE MOTHER OF A TEENAGE SHOOTING VICTIM WHO ASK, IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE BOTH PRO-GUN AND PRO-LIFE?**

Directed by: Abigail Disney and Kathleen Hughes  
Story environment: Familiar

**BAG IT**



**OUR LIVES ARE TOO PLASTIC**

Directed by: Susan Beraza  
Story environment: Familiar

**BLACKFISH**



**PROVOKING A HUGE BACKLASH AGAINST SEAWORLD KNOWN AS THE 'BLACKFISH EFFECT'**

Directed by: Gabriela Cowperthwaite  
Story environment: Fresh

**BOY 23**



**THE UNKNOWN STORY OF 50 ORPHANS WHO WERE ENSLAVED BY NAZI SYMPATHIZERS IN BRAZIL**

Directed by: Belisário Franca  
Story environment: Fresh

**BUDRUS**



**NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE UNITES IN PALESTINE**

Directed by: Julia Bacha  
Produced by Ronit Avni, Rula Salameh & Just Vision  
Story environment: Entrenched

**BURMA VJ**



**THE BRAVE VIDEO JOURNALISTS OF BURMA WHO COVERED THE SAFFRON REVOLUTION**

Directed by: Andres Østergaard  
Story environment: Familiar

**BULLY**



**TACKLING SCHOOL BULLYING IN AMERICA**

Directed by: Lee Hirsch  
Story environment: Familiar

**CASABLANCA CALLING**



**MOROCCO'S FIRST FEMALE MUSLIM LEADERS SET OUT TO CHANGE THEIR COUNTRY**

Directed by: Rosa Rogers  
Story environment: Fresh

**CHARM CITY**



**A PORTRAIT OF THE POLICE, CITIZENS, AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS LEFT ON THE FRONT LINES IN BALTIMORE.**

Directed by: Marilyn Ness  
Story environment: Familiar



**CHASING CORAL**



**SHOWS THE TANGIBLE, DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF OUR WARMING PLANET**

Directed by: Jeff Orlowski  
Story environment: Entrenched

**CHASING ICE**



**GATHERING UNDENIABLE EVIDENCE OF OUR CHANGING PLANET**

Directed by: Jeff Orlowski  
Story environment: Familiar

**CITIZENFOUR**



**MASS SURVEILLANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR PERSONAL PRIVACY AND PUBLIC POLICY**

Directed by: Laura Poitras  
Story environment: Fresh

**DALYA'S OTHER COUNTRY**



**THE NUANCED STORY OF MEMBERS OF A FAMILY DISPLACED BY THE SYRIAN CONFLICT WHO ARE REMAKING THEMSELVES AFTER THE PARENTS SEPARATE**

Directed by: Julia Meltzer  
Story environment: Entrenched

**DEEP DOWN**



**A STORY FROM THE HEART OF THE COAL COUNTRY (US)**

Directed by: Sally Rubin & Jen Gilomen  
Story environment: Familiar

**THE END OF THE LINE**



**TIME TO ADDRESS GLOBAL OVER-FISHING**

Directed by: Rupert Murray  
Story environment: Fresh

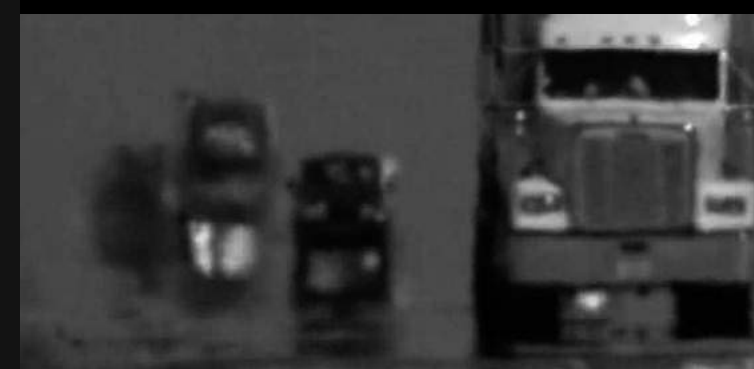
**ESCAPE FIRE**



**THE FIGHT TO RESCUE AMERICAN HEALTHCARE**

Directed by: Matthew Heineman & Susan Froemke  
Story environment: Familiar

**EVERYTHING'S COOL**



**SCIENCE AND POPULAR BELIEF IN GLOBAL WARMING**

Directed by: Judith Helfand  
Story environment: Familiar

**FOOD CHAINS**



**EXPLOITATION OF FARM WORKERS IN THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IN THE US**

Directed by: Sanjay Rawal  
Story environment: Fresh

**FOOD INC.**



**IS THE FOOD CAPITALISM PRODUCES ACTUALLY GOOD FOR US?**

Directed by: Robert Kenner  
Story environment: Hidden

**GASLAND**



**FRACKING DAMAGES COMMUNITIES**

Directed by: Josh Fox  
Story environment: Hidden

**THE GHOSTS IN OUR MACHINE**



**THE OVERLOOKED ANIMALS CRUCIAL TO OUR INDUSTRIES**

Directed by: Liz Marshall  
Story environment: Hidden

**GIVE UP TOMORROW**



**MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Directed by: Michael Collins  
Produced by: Marty Syjuco  
Story environment: Fresh

**GRANITO**



**WITH A CONVICTION OF A DICTATOR, GRANITO IS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF DOCUMENTARY FILM**

Directed by: Pamela Yates  
Story environment: Hidden

**HE NAMED ME MALALA**



**A PORTRAIT OF THE YOUNG PAKISTANI FEMALE ACTIVIST & EDUCATION CAMPAIGNER**

Directed by: Davis Guggenheim  
Story environment: Entrenched

**THE HOUSE I LIVE IN**



**COULD THIS BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE 'WAR ON DRUGS'?**

Directed by: Eugene Jarecki  
Story environment: Familiar

**IDA'S DIARY**



**A WOMAN CREATES A VIDEO DIARY TO HELP HER CONTROL HER PERSONALITY DISORDER.**

Directed by: August B. Hansen  
Story environment: Fresh

**THE INTERRUPTERS**



**EX-GANG MEMBERS WORKING TO REDUCE VIOLENCE IN CHICAGO**

Directed by: Steve James  
Produced by: Alex Kotlowitz  
Story environment: Familiar



**THE INVISIBLE WAR**



**REVEALING EFFECTS OF RAPE IN THE US MILITARY**

Directed by: Kirby Dick  
Produced by: Amy Zierling  
Story environment: Fresh

**LIONESS**



**FEMALE COMBAT VETERANS IN US**

Directed by: Meg McLagan & Daria Sommers  
Story environment: Fresh

**MINERS SHOT DOWN**



**WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT THE MARIKANA MASSACRE IN 2012**

Directed by: Rehad Desai  
Story environment: Hidden

**NO FIRE ZONE**



**HOLDING THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR WAR CRIMES DURING A HIDDEN WAR**

Directed by: Callum Macrae  
Story environment: Hidden

**NO IMPACT MAN**



**MINIMISING OUR PERSONAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Directed by: Laura Gabbert & Justin Schein  
Story environment: Familiar

**NOTES ON BLINDNESS**



**IN 1983, WHEN WRITER JOHN HULL GOES BLIND JUST BEFORE THE BIRTH OF HIS SON, HE STARTS MAKING A DIARY ON AUDIO CASSETTE TO MAKE SENSE OF ALL THE CHANGES**

Directed by: Peter Middleton & James Spinney  
Story environment: Familiar

**ONE MILE AWAY**



**THE ATTEMPTS BY TWO WARRING GANGS IN INNER-CITY BIRMINGHAM, TO BRING PEACE TO THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Directed by: Penny Woolcock  
Story environment: Entrenched

**OUT OF THE SILENCE**



**ADDRESSING SMALL-TOWN HOMOPHOBIA IN THE US**

Directed by: Joe Wilson & Dean Hamer  
Story environment: Familiar

**PARADOTOS**



**A PORTRAIT OF EIGHT BRAZILIAN PARALYMPIC ATHLETES SINCE THE 2012 LONDON GAMES**

Directed by: Marcelo Mesquita & Peppe Sifredi  
Story environment: Familiar

**PLEASE REMEMBER ME**



**A MOVING AND HUMANISTIC DOCUMENTARY FOLLOWING AN ELDERLY COUPLE STRUGGLING WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE**

Directed by: Qing Zhao  
Story environment: Familiar

**THE QUIPU PROJECT**



**AN INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THOUSANDS OF PERUVIANS BEING STERILISED IN THE 90'S WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT**

Directed by: Maria Court & Rosemarie Lerner  
Story environment: Hidden

**THE RECKONING**



**THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COURT**

Directed by: Pamela Yates  
Produced by: Paco Onis  
Story environment: Familiar

**RAISING BERTIE**



**THREE AFRICAN-AMERICAN BOYS AS THEY COME OF AGE OVER THE COURSE OF SIX YEARS IN BERTIE COUNTY, N.C.**

Directed by: Margaret Byrne  
Story environment: Familiar

**SHORE STORIES**



**ADDRESSES THE IMPACT OF OFFSHORE DRILLING**

Directed by: Savannah and Ogeechee Riverkeeper  
Story environment: Hidden

**SIN BY SILENCE**



**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (US)**

Directed by: Olivia Klaus  
Story environment: Hidden

**SITA KIMYA (I WON'T BE SILENT)**



**SEX AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN KENYA**

Directed by: Cajetan Boy  
Story environment: Hidden

**SYRIA'S DISAPPEARED**



**NEW EVIDENCE REVEALS A NETWORK OF CLANDESTINE DETENTION CAMPS IN SYRIA**

Directed by: Sara Asfahar  
Story environment: Hidden

**THANK YOU FOR THE RAIN**



**WORLDS COLLIDE ON THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Directed by: Julie Dahr  
Story environment: Fresh



**THE CLOSER WE GET**



**THE STORY OF DUTIFUL DAUGHTER KAREN AS SHE RETURNS HOME TO HELP CARE FOR HER MOTHER ANN, WHO HAS SUFFERED A DEVASTATING STROKE**

Directed by: Karen Guthrie  
Story environment: Familiar

**TREMBLING BEFORE G-D**



**GAY AND LESBIAN ORTHODOX JEWS RECONCILING THEIR SEXUALITY AND THEIR FAITH**

Directed by: Sandi DuBowski  
Story environment: Fresh

**TROUBLE THE WATER**



**LIVES AFFECTED BY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA**

Directed by: Tia Lessin & Carl Deal  
Story environment: Familiar

**UNEARTHED**



**INVESTIGATING FRACKING IN THE UNITED STATES**

Directed by: Jolynn Minnar  
Story environment: Entrenched

**UNREST**



**WHEN HARVARD PH.D. STUDENT JENNIFER BREA IS STRUCK DOWN BY A FEVER THAT LEAVES HER BEDRIDDEN, SHE SETS OUT ON A VIRTUAL JOURNEY TO DOCUMENT HER STORY AS SHE FIGHTS A DISEASE THAT MEDICINE FORGOT**

Directed by: Jennifer Brea  
Story environment: Fresh

**VIRUNGA**



**AFRICA'S OLDEST NATIONAL PARK UNDER THREAT FROM WAR AND MINING**

Directed by: Orlando von Eisedel  
Story environment: Hidden

**WEAPON OF WAR**



**DISCUSSING RAPE WITH PERPETRATORS IN THE CONGO**

Directed by: Ilse and femke van Velzen  
Story environment: Entrenched

**WAITING FOR SUPERMAN**



**AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Directed by: Davis Guggenheim  
Story environment: Familiar

**WHEN THE GUNS GO SILENT**



**THE FARC GUERRILLAS AGREE TO A PEACE DIALOGUE WITH THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AFTER 50 YEARS OF FIGHTING**

Directed by: Natalia Orozco  
Story environment: Entrenched

**WHERE SOLDIERS COME FROM**



**FOLLOWING THE FOUR-YEAR JOURNEY OF CHILDHOOD FRIENDS WHO JOIN THE NATIONAL GUARD AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL**

Directed by: Heather Courtney  
Story environment: Familiar

**WHO IS DAYANI CRYSTAL**



**THE DANGERS OF THE MIGRANT TRAIL IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

Directed by: Marc Silver  
Story environment: Fresh



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