

**The Narrative Report on the Explore Impact project activities
of the 17th WATCH DOCS. Human Rights in Film IFF**

Warsaw, December 7 – 14, 2017



The 17th WATCH DOCS IFF was organized by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, partner in the Explore Impact project funded by the Visegrad Fund.

The main activity in the frame of the project was **the working seminar 'Explore Impact'**, which took place on December 11-12, 2017.

The preparation started in October 2017 when the 1st draft program was written by the project coordinator Marta Szuchnicka and Maciej Nowicki, Vice-president of the board of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and Director of the WATCH DOCS Festival. To take part in the project as speakers, we have decided to invite three outstanding experts: Rebecca Ashdown from Together Film, who developed an impact campaign around the film "Unrest," Katrine Kiilgaard - Deputy Director of the CPH:DOX Festival and Head of Industry & Training, as well as Brigid O'Shea, Head of DOK Industry at DOK Leipzig IFF.

Two members from each partner festival in the project were invited as participants: CineDoc-Tbilisi, DocuDays US, Verzio and One World IFF. We have also invited representatives of other festivals: Movies that Matter, Bergen International Film Festival, Human Rights Human Wrongs (Oslo), Inconvenient Films FF, Tempo Documentary FF, WATCH DOCS Belarus, and IDFA. One of the invited participants was also Leonie Holkenbrink from Action Against Hunger in Berlin, which is about to organize their first human rights film festival in Berlin. She approached us once she had learned about the Explore Impact project in order to implement some impact activities during the first edition of the festival.

The meeting started with presentations of selected impact and audience building projects delivered by the representatives of invited festivals.



Presentation of Melissa Lindgren, Tempo Documentary FF

Each presentation finished with a discussion and many questions. Some of the presented projects were similar to the activities other festivals take up so it was an opportunity to compare, discuss and learn from each other. One of the examples of such topics was the availability of cinemas for the viewers with disabilities. Most of the present festivals find it as their priority but encounter various difficulties. A long discussion enabled sharing good practices between festivals and discussing challenges. Many presented projects were new and were an inspiration for starting novel projects.

During the first day of the meeting we had two presentations given by the experts. Katrine Kiilgaard, the Deputy Director of Industry & Training at CPH:DOX IFF, was the first to start. She discussed industry projects at the CPH:DOX IFF. The presentation aroused great interest among all participants. CPH:DOX is one of the biggest and best known documentary film festivals in Europe. Experience and knowledge Katrine Kiilgaard shared during the meeting was priceless for all participants. The discussion after the presentation was long and brought many new ideas.



Katrine Kiilgaard, the Deputy Director of Industry & Training at CPH:DOX

Katrine Kiilgaard's speech was followed by Rebecca Ashdown's presentation of Together Films. She developed an impact campaign around the film "Unrest." The film was screened at the 17th WATCH DOCS IFF and participants had an opportunity to watch it during the meeting. The presentation of Rebecca Ashdown was designed to show how a campaign developed together with a film can have a real impact on the problem presented in a film and how film festivals organizers can contribute to such campaigns.

On the second day, we started with a screening of one of the films included in the Explore Impact film program – "Guardians of the Earth" by Filip Antoni Malinowski – a documentary on the 2015 Paris Climate Summit. Subsequently, Brigid O'Shea of DOK Leipzig gave a presentation on the DOK Industry programme at her festival. She paid special attention to the festival's cooperation with the city's largest prison and prisoners' jury project, as well as to the way the film content of the event is made available to people with disabilities.

During the second day we also had a discussion on possible cooperation on joint projects. During this discussion we talked about different ways of measuring impact and possible cooperation in this field, taking into account concrete projects that CPH:DOX and One World Prague are going to launch soon. Moreover, we talked about the ways human rights films festivals might combine their efforts in reaching new audiences and organizing alternative, social distribution of committed documentaries. The question how to present our achievements in this regard to the film industry and potential supporters in a more efficient way was also debated.



Participants of the working seminar "Explore Impact"

List of participants

1. Rebecca Ashdown – speaker
2. Katrine Kiilgaard, CPH:DOX – speaker
3. Brigid O'Shea, DOK Leipzig – speaker
4. Daria Bassel, DocudaysUA
5. Olha Birzul, DocudaysUA
6. Lucie Farkova, One World FF (she replaced Ivana Linhartová)
7. Michaela Weingartová, One World FF

8. Artchil Khetagouri, CineDoc-Tbilisi
9. Ketevani Kapanadze, CineDoc-Tbilisi
10. Eniko Gyuresko, Verzio
11. Hanna Eichner, Verzio
12. Rosan Breman, Movies that Matter
13. Birute Sabatauskaite, Inconvenient Films FF
14. Juste Zavisaitė, Inconvenient Films FF
15. Gediminas Andriukaitis, Inconvenient Films FF
16. Leonie Holkenbrink, Action Against Hunger, Berlin
17. Alina Radachynskaya, WATCH DOCS Belarus
18. Marina Shtrahova, WATCH DOCS Belarus
19. Ingebjørg Aarhus Braseth, BIFF
20. Øystein Solvang, Human Rights Human Wrongs
21. Melissa Lindgren, Tempo Documentary FF
22. Rada Šešić, IDFA
23. Maciej Nowicki, WATCH DOCS IFF
24. Marta Szuchnicka, WATCH DOCS IFF

While preparing our film program for the 17th WATCH DOCS IFF, we were especially looking for films that are or may and should be accompanied by impact campaigns to trigger a tangible social change.

Five such films were included in the program and presented to the festival audiences. They were also promoted in a special leaflet distributed in our cinemas. The information on the “Explore Impact” project was also present in the official festival catalogue and on the festival website. Rebecca Ashdown, impact professional who developed a social campaign around the “Unrest” documentary, met the general festival audience as well, in the frame of a Q&A she had after the public screening of the film.

The films included in the **Explore Impact film screenings** were:

1. **“Unrest,”** dir. Jennifer Brea, USA
2017, 98'

Jennifer Brea, a Ph.D. student at Harvard University, has always lived life to the fullest. Everything changed, however, when she fell ill with the flu one day and, despite undergoing treatment, was unable to return to her former health. When doctor after doctor mistakenly diagnosed her with a psychiatric disorder, she decided to start



documenting her daily life and the painstaking process of getting information about the illness that she was actually suffering from. *Unrest* is an extremely intimate, honest and moving record of the life of a person suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), a condition that is difficult to diagnose and treat and that, according to some estimates, may afflict some 30 million people worldwide, 85 percent of whom are women. Meanwhile, the level of knowledge about CFS is shockingly low, and research is underfunded. In extreme cases, bedridden patients are taken from their families and placed in closed psychiatric facilities.

2. **"Dead Donkeys Fear no Hyenas,"** dir. Joakim Demmer; Finland, Germany, Sweden



2016,85'

At the airport in Addis Ababa, porters unload bags of food to feed a starving country while, at the same time, other planes are loaded with food for export. This observation provided Joakim Demmer with the starting point for what turned out to be a seven-year film investigation into

large foreign investments in Ethiopian land. "Dead Donkeys Fear No Hyenas" is a sophisticated political thriller that, at the same time, maintains the highest standards of documentary integrity. Demmer reveals a world in which Saudi investors and corrupt Ethiopian authorities, using financing from the World Bank, forcibly displace entire communities, pushing small farmers into dependence on humanitarian aid and initiating a vicious cycle of violence. Independent journalists and those defending the devastated environment are met with brutality. It would be difficult to come up with a better-documented film indictment or a more compelling way to question about our joint responsibility. As Demmer says, "The sugar in my coffee, the cotton in my T-shirt and even the flowers for my mother might very well come from stolen land."

3. **"Guardians of the Earth,"** dir. Filip Antoni Malinowski, Austria 2017. 85'

Fourteen days, more than 20,000 negotiators, 195 countries, thousands of competing interests and the need to create a single text accepted by everyone. Through the eyes of director Filip Antoni Malinowski, the 2015 Paris Climate Summit is a



fascinating and complicated puzzle and, at times, even a suspenseful action film. This can largely be attributed to the film's extraordinary protagonists: an experienced expert representing Bangladesh, Saleemul Huq; and the charismatic Christina Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. One of the documentary's strong points is that it shows the mechanisms through which global negotiations take place, revealing some countries' hidden economic interests, and, above all, giving a voice to so many parties around the world regarding climate change. During the Paris summit shown in the film, a historic agreement is reached with the aim of limiting global warming. The start of Donald Trump's presidency, however, was marked by his announcement of the United States' withdrawal from the agreement.

4. **"Syria's Disappeared: The Case Against Assad,"** dir. Sara Afshar, UK 2017, 51'



Although the war in Syria has been at the center of the world's media attention for years, little is known about the fate of tens of thousands of missing men, women and children kidnapped by the regime's security services and detained in secret prisons. The protagonists in Sara Afshar's film want to change this. In view of a future trial against Syria's dictator at a secret location in Europe, they have been

diligently collecting the testimony of witnesses and documents discovered in the regime's destroyed archives. The evidence includes images of people who have been murdered and prisoners' letters written in blood on pieces of material that have been smuggled out of the country. Witnesses speak of torture and the industrial scale of the regime's crimes. Bashar al-Assad is unlikely to face trial anytime soon, but when it finally happens, thanks to the enormous work done by dozens of people—former prisoners, deserters from the regime's army and world-class lawyers—there will be no doubt about the evidence for the indictment.

5. **"Bending the Arc,"** dir. Kief Davidson, Pedro Kos; USA 2017, 102'

In theory, everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental healthcare, but in practice few believe that this really applies to the poorest people in the world's poorest countries. So when a group of activist physicians decided to prove that it was possible to treat difficult cases of tuberculosis in Peru, they



even faced opposition from the medical establishment and official WHO policy, which did not recommend such treatment because of the costs and difficulty. Their success was possible because of the prior experience of Haiti, where the involvement of local communities brought about excellent results: the friends and neighbors of patients were given proper training and thus became social healthcare workers. Today, Partners in Health is a large-scale organization that is transforming global healthcare culture. In Kief Davidson and Pedro Kos's film, the epic battle for the right to healthcare for everyone is represented by its pioneers: Paul Farmer, Jim Yong Kim and Ophelia Dahl. They are worth getting to know if only because they will be able to lift your spirits like few others.