

**Regional STEPS CONFERENCE  
Using film as a tool for social change**

**Boschendal, Western Cape, South Africa  
April 9<sup>th</sup>- April 13<sup>th</sup> 2018.**



*"We came from different places, with different knowledge and different expectation, yet networking gave us the opportunity to interact and learn from each other".*

Thirty eight community and media activists from civil society organisations from Lesotho, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Malawi convened at the Boschendal Retreat from the 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The retreat provided the perfect environment for learning and sharing best practices of using documentary films as an advocacy tool; watching and discussing films, exploring social change and networking.

Case studies from around the region and film screenings with a strong focus on youth activism, demonstrated the impact of documentary films.

*"Youth have a major role to play in effecting change; all we need are right tools like documentary films to make our contribution".*

Youth activists shared how they have screened their films to promote community dialogues. In Malawi the participatory film "Mother at fifteen" became an important tool to campaign for the rights of pregnant girls and underage mothers, contributing to policy changes to ban child marriages and ensure access to education for girls.

Film protagonists from Lesotho presented two short films "Tsoarang" and "Papali". The courageous and humorous approach of the protagonists created a moving debate about challenges young people, living with HIV face and how the films have been used in a multitude of situations advocating for more understanding and tolerance.

Zambian activists from disability rights organisations shared how their film "Music Activists", has become a powerful advocacy tool to demand inclusion of

people with disabilities. John, a person with albinism and main film protagonist has screened the film in communities and on local TV stations to address human rights abuses people with albinism are facing not only in Zambia but in the entire Southern African region.

The newly produced participatory film 'Our Sand' documented the devastating practices of large scale extraction of sand from river beds and other ecologically sensitive areas in South Africa's Limpopo Province. The documentary also gave an insight into the effects of the growing building industry as well as corruption and lack of legal regulations by the State in this matter.

Solar powered, portable screening backpacks were introduced for film screenings in remote areas without electricity. The first three sets are being piloted in Malawi and Uganda. They will also be used to explore social entrepreneurship avenues for youth facilitators and the organizations they are linked to.



Malawi partners walk away with their portable screening backpacks

Participants examined different stages of social change from personal, community and society levels. Groups reflected on their own social change planning process and discussed the use of social media for advocacy. Youth activists filmed short interviews with their cell phones to demonstrate how these can be used to document change stories and impact.

*"Change can be achieved beyond the individual level. We should thrive to go beyond and have impact on communities and policies".*



The seminar ended with a review of the conference journey and the way forward by organisational groups. Indeed, we are a great network! A big thank you goes to Bread for the World, Weltfriedensdienst (WFD), Bertha Foundation and Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) for their commitment and continued support.

*“Thank you for the great opportunity to learn and share with our fellow comrades in the fight for social change in our lifetime”.*

