



## TVE/UNICEF Films on child survival in Africa Summary of Storylines

***Africa's Child*** - Directors - Jonathan Allen and Alex Gabbay; Produced by Enock Chinyenze, John Riber and Davina Rodrigues (25' - documentary)

Filmed in Benin, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), *Africa's Child* introduces some of the key issues involved in child survival in sub-Saharan African countries - and highlights the work that UNICEF and its partners are doing to promote often simple, cost-effective interventions that can help halt child mortality across the continent. In Malawi - one of the poorest countries in Africa - the film shows the remarkable progress achieved by the Malawian government in cutting under-five child deaths by promoting exclusive breastfeeding, improved child nutrition and hygiene and sanitation. In the West African country of Benin, President Yayi Boni demonstrates the vital role governments can play in pushing for higher child survival rates when he launches a nationwide campaign to distribute mosquito nets, vitamin A drops and de-worming tablets to families across the country. In the DRC, the film underlines the tragic consequences that ongoing civil conflict, displaced communities and sexual violence have on survival prospects for young children.



***‘...and the letter that the children sent to God said...’***  
Directed and produced by Khalo Matabane, (16' -documentary)

A poignant insight into the impact that growing inequality in South Africa is having on children's prospects in poor communities in rural Kwa Zulu Natal, Khalo Matabane's film uses handheld cameras to record the daily lives of 11 year old Bonothile Zondi, and 7 year old orphaned Sihle Ngubane and their extended families. We see the children going to school, collecting water from the pump, visiting a local clinic, struggling with home-work. We learn about their dreams, their sorrows and their fears for the future. Bonothile and Sihle have both had to face harsh realities of losing relatives to HIV/AIDS, as well as hunger and death at a very young age, and are wise beyond their years.



**Survivre a Tout Prix**

*Directed by Fanta Regina Nacro (14'30" - documentary)*



Set in a village in rural Burkina Faso, Fanta Regina Nacro's moving documentary film follows the campaign by community health worker Kobo, and his midwife and health practitioner colleague Judith, to increase local parents' awareness of the vital role that better nutrition, improved hygiene and bed-nets can play in helping keep their young children alive. Mortality rates for under-fives year olds in Burkina Faso are high - with many children dying from common diseases like malaria, diarrhea

and acute respiratory infections. Kobo and Judith show parents how to make enriched porridge from millet, groundnuts and beans, to help counter malnutrition and childhood anaemia, urge pregnant women to remember to attend ante-natal clinics at the local hospital, and organize a lively village drama to help reinforce the importance of children sleeping under bed-nets.

**Roofless,**

*Directed by Licio Azevedo (16'30" - docu-drama)*

Licio Azevedo's powerful story focuses on the struggle of young widow, Cecilia Xavier Cumanio, to raise her four children on her own - in the face of the traditional oppression against widows still practiced in Mozambique today. When Cecilia's husband is killed in an accident in South Africa, her father-in-law accuses her of responsibility for his death, and seizes her family home, along with all her clothes and possessions. Forced to live in a tin shack, Cecilia earns a meagre living as a seasonal worker on a sugar plantation worker. She finally seeks advice from Maria Aduzinda de Almeida, chairperson of the *Association of Women Abandoned by the Sugar Industry* who assures Cecilia that adversity will only make her stronger, and encourages her to start a court case against her late husband's family for the return of her property.



### **Life in Slow Motion**

Directed by Tunde Kelani (drama - 17' 15")



A striking Nollywood drama, Tunde Kelani's story is a morality tale about what's known as the 'Dutch effect' - the fact that oil and other resource wealth has often been more of a curse than a blessing in African countries - and for the most vulnerable section of the population in particular. Jimi Bello, a Nigerian bureaucrat, attends an energy conference in neighbouring Ghana - ostensibly to advise his Ghanaian colleagues on how to manage their new oil profits, but in reality to secure a foothold for

Nigerian interests in Ghana's oil sector. In his hotel bar, Jimi meets Afua, a student working as a prostitute to pay her college fees. Afua tells him her son is ill, back in her home village. When Jimi insists she take him there to visit, he witnesses first-hand the sickly state of all the village children, who the locals claim are 'cursed'. Realizing that the new oil pipeline has poisoned the village water supply Jimi's forced to reevaluate his agenda in Ghana - and to come to terms with the loss of his own four-year old son as a result of drinking contaminated water in a Nigerian village.

### **The Sharing Day**

Directed by Tsitsi Dangarembga (drama - 17')

Ten-year old Tabitha is an HIV positive orphan who lives with her Mainini (a Shona word for aunt) in a village in Zimbabwe. But embittered at being abandoned by her husband and worn out by the daily struggle to survive in Zimbabwe's economic crisis, Mainini neglects Tabitha, and crucially fails to feed her the nutritious diet she needs to cope with her HIV status. As Tabitha's



health deteriorates, her school friend Tino and Tino's mother's concerns grow, and they do their best to take care of her. Tragically, their help comes too late. But it does have one redeeming outcome, helping to bring together and energises the village community to help its most vulnerable members. At the height of Tsitsi Dangarembga's memorable drama, singer and actor Plaxedes Wenyika's powerful delivery of the song '*Shingira*', helps underline the everyday heroism of ordinary people - teachers, doctors or health professionals - taking positive action to keep children like Tabitha alive, in spite of the harsh economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe today.

**'Ca Va Aller?'**

*Produced and directed by Idrissa Ouédraogo (drama - 12')*



Idrissa Ouedraogo's magical drama tells the story of five -year old Madi who lives with his parents and baby brother in a remote village in Burkina Faso. Walking home with his mother Awa after she's been collecting wood, Madi finds a turtle dove caught in a trap. He's about to kill it, to put it out of its suffering, when the dove speaks, telling Madi that if he spares its life, he will come to Madi's aid whenever he needs it. All he has to do is click his fingers! Accepting the the deal, Madi frees the bird.

Later that day, after Salif, Madi's father has quarrelled with his mother and shouted at Madi for trying to steal eggs from the hen coop because he was hungry, Madi clicks his fingers and summons the turtle dove's help. From the surrounding desert a band of mounted horsemen gallop in and summon the village. The chief horseman - who is, he tells Madi, the turtle dove - berates the village men for neglecting their families. 'Aren't you ashamed of yourselves', he demands of them, for letting their wives do all the work, walking for hours each day to fetch water, looking after the children. Didn't their ancestors used to dig wells with their bare arms, he asks them. Cowed by his rage, Salif and the other men set about digging a new well and fitting it with a water pump. While the men are digging, the horseman assembles the children to tell them how nutritious eggs are for their growth, and organizes a feast of boiled eggs. Meanwhile, with the new water supply, the village has planted a flourishing communal garden of cabbages and greens - promising a still more varied diet for the children. As the horsemen take their leave of a grateful village, Madi clicks his fingers one more time - and the radio then reports that, following protests far away in the capital, the government has announced a complete change of heart, introducing new policies to help improve the lives of all people living in rural areas.

