Thinking Outside of the Box, through Film and Art

One of the greatest hurdles in guaranteeing every girl’s right to an education is to change the mindsets of policy makers, community leaders and family members. Film is an original and promising vehicle to transform attitudes and move people to act on behalf of girls’ education. Film is a powerful tool to amplify the voices of girls speaking out on their own behalf. Around the world UNICEF and its partners are using the power of film to highlight the importance of girls’ education.

**To Education a Girl in Nepal and Uganda** The United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) supported the production of To Educate a Girl, which tells the inspiring story of young girls pursuing their education despite odds. Filmmakers Frederick Rendina and Oren Rudavsky traveled to Nepal and Uganda in 2010 to document the lives of girls determined to follow their dreams amid poverty and in the aftermath of conflict.

“I will go to school. I will take my notebook and pen,” says Mercy, a resolute and unforgettable six-year-old growing up in post-war Uganda. On the other side of the globe, in the hills of Nepal thirteen-year-old Sanju reminds viewers of the damaging effects of poverty on girls’ opportunities. She also knows that if only given the chance, she could do great things: “If I were rich,” she says, “I’m sure I would become a scientist.” To Educate a Girl has been screened at numerous film festivals and at many colleges and universities.

UNGEI also teamed with the U.S. Fund for UNICEF to create lesson plans to accompany the film, helping students to learn about the disparity in education for boys and girls and take action to eliminate these disparities.

http://youtu.be/7wwOaVV4rgg
A bright spot in darkness in Guinea

In Guinea, UNICEF supported the production of the Eva Weber’s acclaimed documentary Black Out. The film follows crowds of youth as they congregate around gas stations and the G’bessia International Airport at night – to study.

Extreme poverty dictates mandatory power outages in Guinea. So during exam season in Conakry, hundreds of students – boys and girls – make a nightly pilgrimage to find light.

One young woman featured in the film tells viewers: “I come from far away to study here [a gas station]. Sometimes I have to spend the night here. As a woman it can be dangerous to go back around 11pm. So sometimes we are forced to spend the night here, because of the lack of electricity.”

Teaming with UNICEF, the filmmaker returned to Guinea to screen the film for local officials, hoping to spark discussion about ways to improve conditions for these students, whose brave determination to pursue an education offers a bright spot in darkness.

“One minute” is more than enough in Romania!

In countries like Romania, UNICEF puts girls behind the camera through OneMinutesJr videos. OneMinutesJr, a partnership between UNICEF and the One Minutes Foundation, is an international initiative that gives marginalized youth an opportunity to create 60-second videos, affording them a chance not only share their views with the world.

http://youtu.be/1IfyLMootyw

In Romania, 14-year-old Alaxandra Dima produced A Part of Me to express her escape life in the slums: “Every day I take the same road to school and my tutoring classes. Everything I see makes me sick: addicts and prostitutes…But I don’t blend in. I try to stand out from the crowd and avoid becoming a bad example. Even though it is hard, I put a lot of effort in everything I do, because I do it for my future! I want to graduate from school and high school, get a job and move out of this neighbourhood. It’s the only way.”

Film is an innovative advocacy tool for girls’ education, changing minds and inspiring action by allowing people to see and hear from girls themselves.

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• http://www.ungei.org
• http://www.blackout-documentary.com/Black_Out/Home.html
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