



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

30 STORIES ARE FINALISTS IN THE FIRST UNITED NATIONS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL **Filmmakers Sydney Pollack and Albert Maysles Lend Support**

New York, NY, May 10, 2005 – Eighty films from the United Nations and 18 of its agencies and field offices around the world have been submitted for competition in the inaugural presentation of **Stories from the Field, The First United Nations Documentary Film Festival**, which will open on May 21 at The New School.

Stories from the Field, a production of the Media Communications Association – International, New York Chapter (MCA-I NY), is presented in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Public Information and New School University. The Festival will mark the first time United Nations agencies and field offices will have had an opportunity to share what they do, through their own words and images, with American audiences.

In a show of support, Academy Award winning filmmaker **Sydney Pollack** (*The Interpreter* [currently playing in theaters], *The Firm*, *Out of Africa*, *Tootsie*, *Three Days of the Condor*) and director/cinematographer/producer **Albert Maysles** (*Gimme Shelter*, *Grey Gardens*, *The Gates - A Project for New York City*) have joined the Festival's Honorary Committee.

One Village at a Time

"Secretary-General Annan has seized the opportunity the UN's 60th anniversary provides to review the work of the Organization, and to focus on how we can do things better," said Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the United Nations, and chairman of the Festival's honorary committee.

"The Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, serve as an excellent list of priorities about issues that we consider at the heart of our work. They were established in 2000 when the leaders of 189 countries came together and, in an unprecedented display of solidarity, decided what must be done if we are to make the world a better place for everyone.

"But the declaration itself was only the beginning. The documentaries you will see at this special event show how the UN is working with people around the world to make the MDGs a reality. You will see a variety of stories about real people working with the UN to achieve the goals one village at a time, for example by making access to education a reality, or by helping their neighbours to stand on their own two feet."

DATES: Saturday, May 21, and Sunday, May 22, 2005. Noon to 9:00 p.m. on both days.

LOCATION: Tishman Auditorium, New School University, 66 W. 12 St. (bet. Fifth & Sixth Aves.), New York, NY 10011.

FEATURING: Film screenings, panel discussions with the filmmakers and others, award presentations.

OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION: Vera List Courtyard, New School University, by invitation or with press credential only.

Media Communications Association – International, New York Chapter

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MCA-I is a 501(c) (6) non-profit trade association, registered in the State of New Jersey.

Background

The purpose of the festival is to:

- ◆ Spotlight some of the people and cultures in areas with a United Nations presence throughout the world and discover what these groups are doing to overcome challenges such as poverty, hunger, disease, civil unrest, trafficking, and injustice.
- ◆ Show how United Nations programs and services are helping communities to develop a civil society, participation, and a better quality of life for their people.
- ◆ Afford those in the trenches—United Nations workers, community leaders, and the people they serve—the opportunity to share their stories of adversity and triumph.

The timing of Stories from the Field has special significance since it will coincide with the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and reflect the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000 by all United Nations Member States, which pledge to:

- ◆ Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- ◆ Achieve universal primary education
- ◆ Promote gender equality and empower women
- ◆ Reduce child mortality
- ◆ Improve maternal health
- ◆ Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- ◆ Ensure environmental sustainability
- ◆ Develop a global partnership for development

The Festival's contestants were asked to submit works whose themes reflect the Millennium Development Goals. Since the Festival was a first-time collaboration between the United Nations and MCA-I NY, the organizers had no idea what kind of response their call for entries would generate. They were delighted with the overwhelming response.

Award Categories

Finalists were selected by a screening committee of United Nations officials, MCA-I representatives, and New School University faculty based on the topical relevance, artistic merit, and production values of their work. Awards will be presented for Best Stories from the Field Feature (40 min. and longer); Best Stories from the Field Short (under 40 min.); and Audience Award.

More Information Online

Festival Web site: www.mcainy.org/unfilm

United Nations: www.un.org

Millennium Development Goals: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

UN Chronicle Online Edition: www.un.org/chronicle

Media Communications Association International, New York Chapter:

www.mcainy.org

New School University: www.newschool.edu

Film synopses, screening times, and tickets are available on the Festival Web site at www.mcainy.org/unfilm. Tickets may also be purchased Monday through Friday, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., at the New School Box Office, 66 West 12 Street (bet. Fifth & Sixth Aves.), New York, NY 10011, and by phone (212) 229-5488 or email boxoffice@newschool.edu.

The seven year reign of Idi Amin Dada—and that of Uganda's first president, Milton Obote, before him—left Uganda a cultural and economic wasteland. Education ceased, there were few trained teachers in the country, and books became so rare that teachers hid them away. Uganda's remarkable recovery after Amin's ouster in 1979, is reflected in this documentary about the government's commitment to provide education for all. It follows one teacher who, along with many others, is being trained to teach Uganda's children, and looks at what is being done to convince families to send their children—girls and boys—to school.

Education for All: The Ugandan Experience (one of 44 films being screened)

Homeless children survive the freezing winters in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar by living in the underground tunnels that heat the city. Two brothers, twelve and five, fend for themselves and each other in one of the coldest cities on earth, while the local authorities try to reunite them with their family. (From the What's Going On? series; winner of the American Library Association Notable Young Adult Video Award.)

Street Children in Mongolia