



*Projecting Hope & Changing Lives through the Power of Film*

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## **REFUGEES MAKING MOVIES**

### ***African Refugee Youth Make Films and Create Film Festival in Refugee Camp***

***New York, NY, October 18, 2007*** - On December 7, 2007, FilmAid International will hold its second annual refugee youth film festival in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.

The film festival is the only festival in the world taking place in a refugee camp, where films are made by refugee youth, and where the only live audience is the refugee community within the camp. The day-long festival features a program of 13 short films made by young refugees.

The film festival consists of ten minute short films that are directed, shot, produced, edited, scripted and acted by refugee youth. The festival is a byproduct of FilmAid's Refugee Filmmaking Project, a participatory video program that puts video cameras in the hands of refugee youth and teaches them basic camera and editing skills in an effort to help them tell their own stories through video. Through the project, refugee youth improve self-esteem while receiving hands-on skills training and a means of communicating within their community. The films then get placed in the film festival and later judged by a panel of peers, refugee elders, community leaders, aid workers and sponsors of the festival. The festival films are also shown the week following the festival at FilmAid's larger outdoor evening screenings throughout the camp. The evening screenings draw refugee audiences in the tens of thousands.

All the films shown at the film festival were written, directed, shot and edited by members of the Refugee Filmmaking Project. Acted by members of the project, they included a cautionary tale about the perils of promiscuous behavior, child abuse and forced early marriage, a docudrama tackling substance abuse, a look at voluntary repatriation and resettlement and the prevention of sexual exploitation.

Originally, the idea for the festival came from refugee youth members of the filmmaking project in the camp. They wanted to record their stories on camera and share them with members of their communities. The Kakuma refugee camp is home to some 90,000 refugees from about 10 African countries. Some 80 percent of the camp residents are from Southern Sudan, which has welcomed back tens of thousands of refugees since the signing of a peace agreement in January of 2005.

*"We are all from different countries, talk different languages, and we have all experienced different wars. But through film we all become one and we are all able to express our ideas, our feelings and our ambitions",* said 20-year-old member of the project. *"That is why the film festival was important to us, because we were able to show our work to others"*

Just like the major film festivals, prizes are awarded in several categories. The best picture and best screenplay, the best male and female actors, best director and best cinematographer all receive certificates and awards of cameras, film and textbooks of their choice among other awards.

The film festival is co-sponsored by Cinereach, The Hollywood Foreign Press and Glamour Magazine's *Reel Moments*.

### **ABOUT FILMAID INTERNATIONAL:**

FilmAid International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) humanitarian aid organization that uses the power of film to educate, entertain and inspire refugees uprooted by violent conflict throughout the world. Through strategic use of film and video, FilmAid communicates life-saving information to refugee audiences on critical health concerns and issues such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, conflict resolution, sexual and gender based violence, women's rights and repatriation. By creating a cinematic event that crosses cultural, literacy and gender and age barriers, FilmAid is able to reach out to every member of the refugee community, resulting in messaging that has reached over 30,000 refugees in a single night. By conveying educational messages in an entertaining format, FilmAid also aims to engage the minds and imaginations of those who have suffered the effects of war and poverty, stimulating physical well-being and alleviating psychological trauma. Refugees have characterized our programs as "medicine for the mind," "water in the desert" and "food for the soul."

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview please call Caroline Avakian at (212) 529-1088 or e-mail Caroline at [cavakian@filmmaid.org](mailto:cavakian@filmmaid.org)  
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