Why?

The potential of local film industries has long been held back by challenges of **distribution** and **exhibition** of African cinema on the continent. The huge settlements outside the major cities where most of the population live, and where emergent filmmakers are to be found, remain under-serviced in terms of access to the arts, and affordable cinemas showcasing local content that speak to social issues. **What is lacking is a viable continent-wide, cinema-going audience that will stimulate local production, via promoting local content.** The film industry contributes $440 million to the GDP of South Africa per annum, and creates 21,626 jobs. However, the industry is largely service driven and has a very low commercial success rate in terms of a cinema going audience - creating only $89.6 million in terms of revenue from ticket sales. If more investment was placed into cinema infrastructure this figure would rise to roughly $500 million. In the past it could be argued that the main challenge facing African cinema was the making of films. **Now the real challenge is to reach wider audiences more effectively, creating markets that support the sustainability of African Cinema.**
What?
Sunshine Cinema is a South African solar powered cinema network. We train and employ youth to be impact producers hosting solar powered screenings on mini cinema kits (the Sunbox). We use relevant documentary and feature films to spark dialogue, educate, and inspire social change.

Where?
We currently work in Alice (EC), Qwa Qwa (FS) and Lebowakgomo (Limpopo), Gaborone (Botswana) and Kitwe (Zambia) with youth entrepreneurs who we employ as Sunbox Ambassadors, and are fundraising to expand across all 9 provinces of South Africa in 2019.
The last twelve months have been our most successful to date. 2018 started with a series of screenings funded by the Dutch organisation, Movies That Matter. We were able to host six large scale screenings in Gugasthebe in Langa of a variety of incredible African films. Each screening was well attended (150 -250 people) with a diversity of audience members and the discussions led by experts like Judy Sikuza, Mandy Sanger and Sindiwe Magona were very powerful. 2018 also saw the launch of our regional Sunbox Ambassadorship program. Thanks to support from the City of Cape Town Arts and Culture Grant in Aid we employed two youth ambassadors for six months to host screenings in Nyanga and Imizamo Yethu of documentaries and features focusing on relevant social issues. In July 2018 we received a grant from Prince Claus Art Fund, under their Next Generation Fund. Combined with generous support from The Bertha Foundation we developed our most ambitious project to date - The Ignite Your Rights project. In each of the five selected locations we launched the programme with a large scale screening of a selected film, and a training workshop for the Ambassadors and community activist organisations from the region. Since launching the Ambassadorship in these regions the Ambassadors have collectively hosted over 60 screenings, reaching over 2300 direct audience members - thanks to partner support from The Children’s Radio Foundation, Agents of Change Foundation in Zambia and Men for Health in Botswana. With the current funding cycle ending we are very pleased that the Bertha Foundation has agreed to continue supporting our existing ambassadors for the next six months. We are forging strong partnerships with relevant community based organisations to ensure the ambassadors receive facilitation training that has lasting social impact. Our themes for 2019-2020 are conservation, gender equality, land and active citizenship.
Message from Sunbox Project Manager

"The Sunbox helps us take the films to different locations and social groups - we can show a film and share knowledge in any kind of space. Many of the places we travel to do not have adequate resources, so people came from miles around to have their first cinema experience. Having the Sunbox makes sure everyone is included in the subsequent conversations we have and also gets to share in the knowledge the films communicate.

The general comment about it from our audiences is a fascination about how a compact box can have all the tools for a successful event. They become even more fascinated when they learn that we can even set up where there is no electricity. I enjoy the question 'What's in your toolbox?' and being referred to as The Lady With The Yellow Suitcase by my neighbours.

This little box is making a big difference in not only my life but hundreds of people all over South Africa!" - Noni

Nozuko Poni
Message from Co-founder Rowan Pybus

If there is one thing that I can express with absolute certainty about the work that we have done as Sunshine Cinema it is that people love conversation and need to talk to each other offline. While we may have an interesting approach to cinema, using green energy showcasing the best of African cinema for free to diverse audiences - but all of this is a distant second to the discussion and the emotions that are released when one is finally free to speak your mind. If this is coupled with care, consideration and without fear amazing actions are taken.

Watching the network of Sunbox Ambassadors enable not only other people but also themselves to share and grow critical lines of thought week after week has been a deeply rewarding experience. The program is working because those that attend are engaged and feel free to express themselves. One would be forgiven for allowing a certain amount of optimism to creep in when you reflect that this process of building solutions triggered by African made films is happening weekly in 3 different countries! If we are in rooms together taking about our collective future from different points of view anything is possible.
Ignite Your Rights Program Recap

- 8000km travelled
- 5 new **Sunboxes** placed and running
- 11 new Sunbox Ambassadors
- 60+ screenings = **2300 direct audience members**
- Over **20 feature and documentary films screened**
- **3 Countries, Six Months.**
The Sunbox Ambassadors from Lebowakgomo, Limpopo
Junior - “This project is very educational for me and it helps with my other projects because am able to share wisdom in my talks when I visit high schools. I found it a bit challenging at first to engage with the audience in term of the asking the right questions, which took me out of my comfort zone for that am grateful.”
Tebogo- “As an individual the program has helped me grow me and improved my public speaking, as I get to interact with different people facing different community challenges. I believe we have touched and changed people lives and their way of doing things”!
Mofenyi - “I am grateful for the platform, its very adventurous, from different screenings I have learned how to interact with different personalities and how to face issues around us”.
How has it impacted the community of Lebowakgomo?

**Thabang Joy- Audience member** - “I have learnt a lot from different movies, I gained more courage and self worth through the conversations, and I also felt more reconnected with my sense of belonging”.

**Senzo- Audience member** - “As a young person I feel documentaries are very much important to watch compared to action films that we watch, such a platform have brought change in our community we are now able to sit down be part of the solution and help build our communities”.

**Cde Loaning -Youth activist** - “As a community we have been blind folded for a very long time, which is why we don’t partake in the decision-making. Let’s be grateful because this project has given us a chance to view life from different angles, we are able to make sound decisions in our everyday lives because the films that we watch reflect life and what is actually happening”.

Solar Cinema Kit
Keitumetse, Qwa Qwa Sunbox Ambassador - “I think Alison was one of our most powerful screenings — The dialogue went from one level to another. Everyone was able to engage. After the screening we also formed a campaign on WhatsApp that will be heightening and fighting all kinds of abuse. This screening proved the power of sparking the conversation that can lead to action”.

**Overall feedback from screening the film across the Sunbox sites:**
Rape cases are handled differently for various demographics, the more privileged groups, such as cis-heterosexual women would stand a better chance at a trial than a transgender woman. A white woman, would not receive as much backlash as a black woman would for both being victims of the same crime. So these are some of the things that need to be interrogated by legal resource centres for protecting rights against GBV.

How has it impacted the community of Qwa Qwa?
Tate Radebe, Qwa Qwa Sunbox Ambassador - “Having a mobile cinema has impacted the communities we go to in a positive way because this project is one of a kind and movies shown to them are those that reflect real life situations so it is easier for them (community members) to engage and spark the conversation. For me as an ambassador it has unlocked the very best potential in me. It has enhanced my profile and work because now I am much more courageous enough to stand and share my opinions. I had a little self doubt in me but now I’ve dealt with it since the project started.”

Keitumetse, Qwa Qwa Sunbox Ambassador - “Showing films all over Qwa Qwa has not only impacted my life but the different communities in Qwa Qwa. People are now able to voice their opinions at the platform we created and come up with possible solutions on issues that come out of the films. On my advocacy journey it has made a difference; from being connected to one organization to now, lots of them. I’ve also learned to have a good relationship with stakeholders and having to learn from the conversation sparked has been an eye opener”.

How has it impacted the community of Qwa Qwa?
Busi Mbetshu - Children’s Radio Foundation Regional Trainer - “Having a Sunbox has been useful because the ambassadors are doing awareness in different ways by showcasing films that then allow people to share their opinions. From the feedback that I heard from other people they really liked the Sunbox as it was a new thing in our community.

When it comes to ambassadors I think being part of this has helped them to gain confidence and also gained problem solving skills because they have experienced some challenges but they managed to do screenings every month. People in the community see them as role models because of this project”.

How has it impacted the community of Alice?
Nomtha Eastern Cape Sunbox Ambassador - “The Sunbox Ambassadorship has improved my life - it boosted my self esteem. I can now stand up to challenges I face with solutions. I am now also building my career and have learned how to use technology - something I didn’t know before. The use of solar in our screenings has also taught me of alternatives for electricity. My mind has also opened up to what’s out there past my village. I would have never thought I would be responsible for the cinema I have always wanted in my village”

Video link: Nomtha’s Story
Olwethu - “My favourite screening was when we screened Dear Mandela - the reason behind is that many young kids got more educated about the effort that Tata Mandela made fighting for the rights of black people even though some of the things have not yet been achieved. The ambassadorship has help me in growth in so many ways - it has taught me so much in terms of how to deal with challenges when you working with diverse people. It has impacted the life of many people in such a way that others will comment that they never heard about something but from the screenings they learn so many things.”

Anonymous Audience Member - “We need to educate people about homosexuality from a young age. It has now become easier for people to accept HIV/AIDS but not gay people?” from a screening of Inxeba: The Wound

Since launching the Alice program, a key achievement has been how the screenings create discussions around issues that have been no-go areas in the past.
Mwape and Precious have partnered with us for screenings and we were very pleased with their work and commend them for approaching us about the screenings. The films and conversation we had were so informative - they have been necessary discussions for us to have.

Madame Grace,
Kachimfya Program, Kitwe, Zambia

(ZAMBIA)
The Sunbox Ambassadorship has been supported by local organisations such as Agents of Change - a youth led initiative focusing on active citizenship and climate change. Kitwe is a conservative space where religion and patriarchy heavily influence and inform policies and legislation. LGBTQI content is illegal, and rights based organisations focusing on LGBTQI issues, gender, and sex work have to operate discreetly. Thus far the Ambassadors have held 10 screenings to over 596 people.

Female Sunbox Ambassador from Kitwe- Precious - comments that “the programme has improved my life, as I have gotten the chance to view issues not only from a narrow perspective but from a far wider view. This has enabled me to interact with people from very different walks of life, and has impacted my own life to be able to change, and view things from diverse perspectives”.
Mwape - Sunbox Ambassador - “The best screening I have enjoyed, was when we screened the People Vs Patriarchy. The documentary brought in one of the most cross cutting issue in Zambia which is gender based violence and whose more superior between a man and a woman that way it made everyone involved because they were all attached to the documentary!”

Overall feedback about the film: There was a lot of frustration in realising just how “brain-washed” women are, and how they themselves have normalised such inequality. There was suggestion to take the movie to various institutions where patriarchy is driven, e.g. the churches and the police departments.

How has it impacted the community of Kitwe? (Continued)
We have learnt that it is not enough to just show a film to a community that may face similar issues to the film’s themes. People arrive at screenings seeking solutions, employment opportunities, and education. There needs to be a symbiotic approach. We need to offer a component of activism training to the Ambassadors in order to provide adequate access to educational tools about citizen rights and legal resources. We cannot solely rely on local partner orgs to provide these opportunities as they also often have limited resources. We need to ensure that our work benefits that of the partners, as otherwise we are piggybacking in resource scarce communities, and overloading them with more work which is unsustainable. They need to get something out of the partnership beyond just showing a film to their audiences. The model is working as the summary of our screening reports and feedback sessions with Ambassadors highlight - but there is a lot of room for improvement.
Key Learnings of 2018 (Continued)

There are core issues regarding lack of funding to cover Sunbox ambassador transport, venue hire, and audience transport. Ambassadors need to invite key community social actors to the screenings to participate in diverse discussions such as leading activists, ward councillors, policymakers, and academics. They need budget to cover these key stakeholders time, and transport. There have also been numerous requests from audiences for a digital portal where the info on the booklets sits so they can share the information with their broader community.

An important takeaway for many local audiences was that the films teach them that even as a small group you can do so much as a unit. Many audience members felt inspired by the activists in the films as it highlighted for them the ability to hold power to account. Many people highlighted that more training is needed about activism, as often they do not know what to do.
Goals for 2019

Sunshine Cinema will develop advocacy tool kits for the Sunboxes, to assist the local partners with their mobilisation strategies. Therefore we need the Ambassadors to receive activism & facilitation training to better equip themselves and the audiences they engage. It is also important to be able to leave behind relevant educational information so that audiences can follow up - flyers/pamphlets/website info. We need to develop advocacy tool kits for the Sunbox kits that can enable communities to be linked to wider networks of activism support, strategies for protest, legal protection, and activism resources in order for the films to really have the impact potential achieved. Continuing the program through online engagement could also be potentially very impactful, strengthening the networks of community mobilization support and accountability so that the local activism is not just happening in isolation.
Based on the initial screening period we have identified the following key themes for 2019:

**LAND & CONSERVATION** - Aim - Raise national and international awareness about the continued and intensifying exploitation of people living on communal and traditional land, and land near mining areas, across the country.

**GENDER EQUALITY** - Aim - Raise national and international awareness about the continued and intensifying social issues of toxic masculinity, inequality and violence faced by women and LGBTQI groups across the continent.

**ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP** - Aim - Many young people do not understand how to exercise their rights as citizens, they do not have the information available about lines of support and feel forgotten. Raise national and international awareness about the continued and intensifying issues of corruption, government mismanagement and the silencing of community dialogues due to political co-option of spaces for democratic engagement.

Our impact goals for our screenings will be determined by preliminary workshops with relevant community organisations and social actors, and the selected youth ambassadors before we curate the screening timetables. We will then bring the selected Ambassadors together to train them in community dialogue techniques as well as monitoring and evaluation strategies that foster growth and benefit for both our mandate, that of the filmmakers, and the local partner organisations at the group training.
Links to Recent Press


**Africa is a Country:** awaiting publication


**Berlinerale Talent Campus, Market Studio Participant** - [https://www.berlinale-talents.de/bt/talent/sydelle-smith/profile](https://www.berlinale-talents.de/bt/talent/sydelle-smith/profile)

What We Screen (In partnership with the generous support of the filmmakers)

Inxeba: The Wound
Sew the Winter to my Skin
Noem My Skollie
Khumba
The First Grader
Strike a Rock
Uprize
Shadow World
Whispering Truth to Power
Sisters of the Wilderness
Allison
Vaya
This Land
This is Congo
Bombay Beach
The Tale
...and many more
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Help Us #SparkConversation

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