

Sunshine  Cinema

IMPACT REPORT

2025-2026



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IFN Member: Xabiso Ndinisa brings the power of cinema to Soweto during the Disney and National Geographic Society Screenings Campaign, using film to spark conversations, inspire communities, and create meaningful connections through storytelling.

ABOUT US

Sunshine Cinema is an award-winning South African non-profit reimagining what cinema can do. We believe stories are more than entertainment - they are bridges. They connect people to one another, communities to opportunity, and ideas to action.

Using our signature **Sunbox** - Africa's first solar-powered mobile cinema kit - we equip young facilitators with the skills, tools, and opportunities to transform public spaces into places of connection, dialogue, and possibility. Every screening becomes more than a film; it becomes a shared experience where communities gather to reflect, learn, and imagine a better future together.

Since 2017, we have trained and learned alongside more than 100 young facilitators, media entrepreneurs, and community leaders from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Mozambique, Kenya, Zambia, and Malawi.

In the 2025 financial year, our network delivered **337 free public screenings**, reaching **15,448 audience members** across Southern Africa.

Our facilitators - known as **Sparks**, and regionally as **Sunbox Ambassadors (SBAs)** - are more than projectionists. They are trusted community facilitators who use storytelling to spark dialogue, strengthen social cohesion, and inspire community-led action. Through Sunshine Cinema's growing network of impact campaigns and partnerships, they also access meaningful gig work, earning income while building skills in facilitation, entrepreneurship, digital media, and event management.

At Sunshine Cinema, we are not simply expanding access to cinema. We are building a youth-led movement where stories create opportunity, strengthen communities, and illuminate new possibilities for the future.



VISION

A continent-wide network of young facilitators using the power of African storytelling to create economic opportunity, strengthen communities, and inspire collective action.

We envision communities where everyone has the opportunity to gather, see themselves reflected in powerful stories, engage in meaningful dialogue, and shape a more just, connected, and sustainable future.

MISSION

To equip young people with the skills, tools, and opportunities to become facilitators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders through mobile cinema and participatory storytelling.

By championing African films and creating trusted spaces for dialogue, we expand audiences for local stories while addressing youth unemployment, strengthening civic participation, and supporting communities to engage with the social, environmental, and economic issues that matter most.

In an increasingly digital world, we believe there is still profound power in gathering together.

When people share stories, they build trust.

When they build trust, they strengthen communities.

And when communities come together, they create the conditions for lasting change.

STORIES AS BRIDGES

We believe African stories belong in African communities.

Too often, communities have limited access to stories that reflect their own languages, cultures, histories, and aspirations.

By bringing African films directly into underserved communities, we help people see themselves reflected on screen, celebrate local identities, and engage with ideas that matter to their lives.

Our screenings become more than cultural events.

They become trusted spaces where people discuss issues such as youth employment, gender equality, climate resilience, conservation, public health, media literacy, and democratic participation.

Every story creates an opportunity for connection.

Every conversation creates an opportunity for action.



THE SUNBOX

At the heart of our model is the Sunbox - Africa's first solar-powered mobile cinema kit.

Portable, durable, and designed for off-grid environments, the Sunbox enables almost any community space to become a cinema.

A school hall.

A church.

A sports field.

A community centre.

Or an open field beneath the stars.

Powered entirely by solar energy, the Sunbox allows facilitators to bring films, dialogue, and learning to places where traditional cinema infrastructure simply doesn't exist.



Each Sunbox includes:

Solar Power System: enabling screenings anywhere, without access to electricity.

Portable Projector: compact, lightweight, and suitable for indoor and outdoor screenings.

Screen and Sound System: delivering high-quality viewing experiences in community settings.

Curated African Film Library: award-winning fiction and documentary films that celebrate African voices, cultures, and lived experiences.

But the Sunbox is much more than equipment.

It is a piece of community infrastructure.

Every time a Sunbox opens, an ordinary space becomes a place where people gather.

Stories become conversations.

Conversations build trust.

Trust creates connection.

And connection creates the conditions for communities to imagine-and shape-a different future together.

MOST SCREENED FILMS IN 2025

The films our facilitators choose reflect the diversity of our programmes and communities. From inspiring biographies to environmental documentaries and locally produced African stories, each screening is selected to spark meaningful dialogue long after the credits roll.

10

TOP
FILMS

135

TOTAL
SCREENINGS

6077

AUDIENCE
REACHED

14

REGIONS
REACHED

80+

COMMUNITIES
REACHED

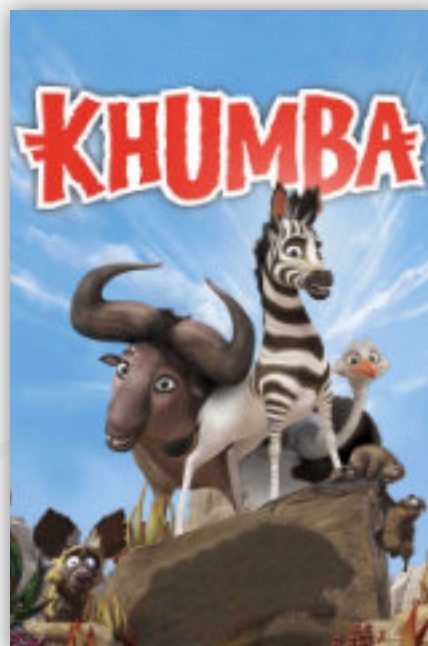


#1

THE BOY WHO
HARNESSED THE WIND

21 SCREENINGS

919 AUDIENCE REACH



#2

KHUMBA

18 SCREENINGS

865 AUDIENCE REACH

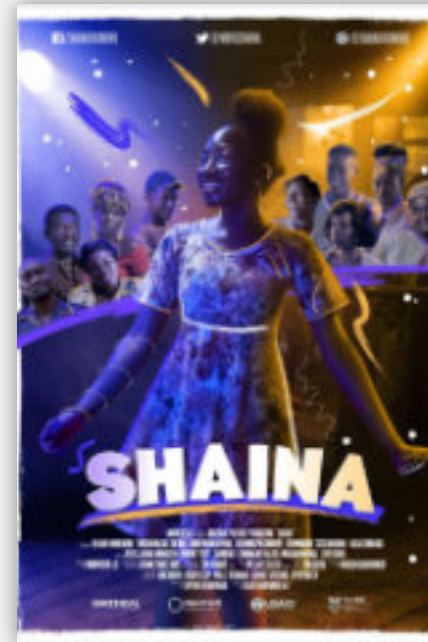


#3

HAPPY FEET

16 SCREENINGS

826 AUDIENCE REACH



#4

SHAINA

14 SCREENINGS

769 AUDIENCE REACH

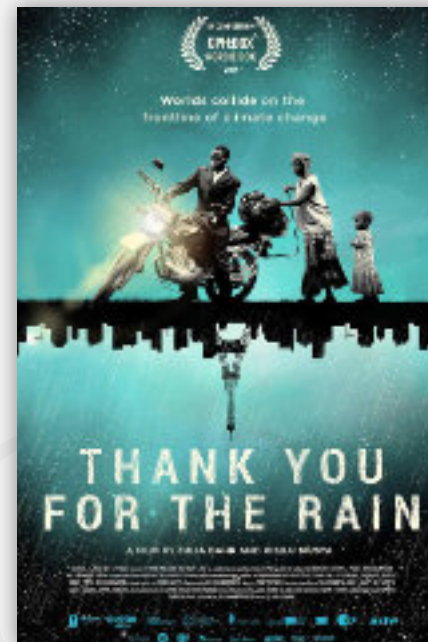


#5

THANDO

13 SCREENINGS

560 AUDIENCE REACH



#6

THANK YOU FOR THE RAIN

12 SCREENINGS

536 AUDIENCE REACH

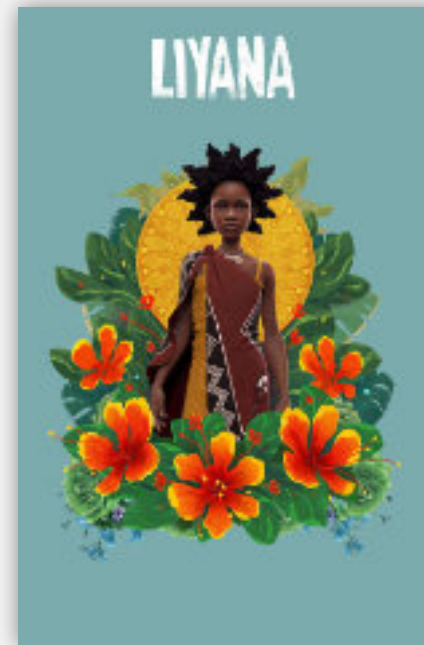


#7

THE FIRST GRADER

11 SCREENINGS

433 AUDIENCE REACH



#8

LIYANA

10 SCREENINGS

425 AUDIENCE REACH

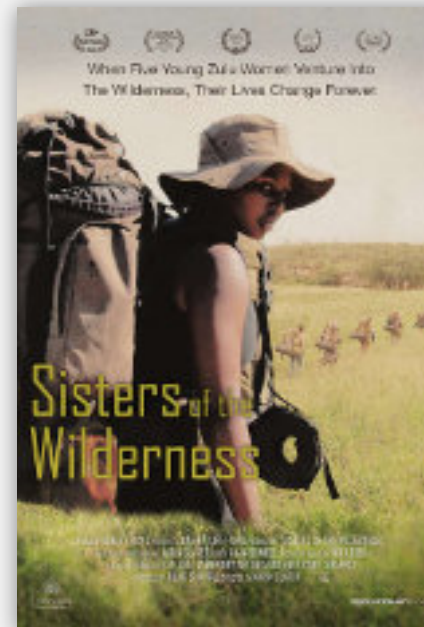


#9

PUMLA

10 SCREENINGS

373 AUDIENCE REACH



#10

SISTERS OF THE WILDERNESS

10 SCREENINGS

371 AUDIENCE REACH

NEWSFLASH:

In 2025, Sunshine Cinema proudly celebrated a major milestone - the completion of the 5th Cohort of the Spark Impact Programme, marking five years of empowering young storytellers and changemakers across Africa.



FIVE YEARS OF SPARK

BUILDING A NETWORK OF OPPORTUNITY



In 2021, Sunshine Cinema launched the **Spark Impact Programme** with a simple idea: what if investing in one young person could strengthen an entire community?

Our first cohort brought together just **20 young people** from across South Africa. We equipped them with facilitation, storytelling, entrepreneurship, and digital media skills, alongside a Sunbox - Africa's first solar-

powered mobile cinema kit - and trusted them to lead conversations in their own communities.

The ambition was never simply to train facilitators.

It was to build a new generation of community leaders who could use stories to create connection, opportunity, and change.

Five years later, that vision has grown beyond what we first imagined.

Through five successful cohorts, the Spark Impact Programme has empowered **more than 100 young facilitators** across South Africa, responding to a growing demand for youth-led approaches that combine creative skills, meaningful work, and civic participation.

But this milestone is about more than numbers. It demonstrates a simple belief at the heart of Sunshine Cinema: when young people are equipped with practical skills, trusted with responsibility, and connected to real opportunities, they don't just transform their own lives - they strengthen the communities around them.

Across our network, Spark facilitators have become trusted conveners, entrepreneurs, storytellers, and changemakers. They have created spaces where neighbours gather, difficult conversations take place, African stories are celebrated, and communities come together to imagine new possibilities.

As the programme matured, so did the opportunities available to our graduates.

What began as a training programme naturally evolved into the **Impact Facilitator Network (IFN)** - Sunshine Cinema's youth-led gig-work agency. While formally launched in 2025, the network has been creating paid opportunities for Spark graduates since 2022, connecting facilitators with campaigns and strategic partnerships that allow them to earn income while applying their skills in real-world settings.

The impact doesn't stop with the facilitator. Our model is designed to circulate opportunity within communities. Through a pay-it-forward approach, facilitators hire local vendors, caterers, creatives, transport providers, and community organisations to support screenings and events. Every opportunity creates another opportunity.

To date, this approach has generated income for **more than 70 additional community members**, demonstrating how investing in one young facilitator creates a ripple effect that strengthens local economies.

Looking back over the past five years, our greatest achievement is not simply that we have trained more than 100 young people.

It is that Spark has evolved into something much bigger than a programme.

It is now a growing ecosystem of opportunity - a network of young leaders using storytelling to create livelihoods, strengthen communities, amplify African voices, and build the social infrastructure that enables people to gather, learn, connect, and imagine a different future together.



IMPACT OVER THE 5 YEARS

COMMUNITIES IMPACTED

9
SA
PROVINCES

8
INTL
COUNTRIES

80+
COMMUNITIES
REACHED

GAUTENG

Soweto, Alexandra, Orange Farm, Atteridgeville, Lorentzville, Bertrams, Roodepoort, Freedom Park, Tshwane, Jeppeshtown

NORTH WEST

Mmabatho, Klerksdorp, Mahikeng, Mafikeng, Ganyesa, Tlaskgameng, Kudungwane

NORTHERN CAPE

Postmasburg, Lime Acres, Dealesville, Soutpan, Kimberley, Groenwater

LIMPOPO

Lebowakgomo, Jane Furse, Mankweng, Botlokwa, Ga-Mothiba, Tafelkop, Sekhukhune, Makgokong, Eldorado Village

MPUMALANGA

Mbombela, Middelburg, Mashishing, Matibidi Village, Msogwaba, Driefontein, Secunda, Mzimuhle, Kwaggafontein, Bushbuckridge

KWAZULU-NATAL

Pietermaritzburg, uMlazi, Empangeni, Estcourt, Durban, Ntabamhlophe, Inanda, KwaMashu, Mseleni, Richards Bay, Tongaat

FREE STATE

Sasolburg, Harrismith, Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa, Rouxville, Botshabelo, Makeneng, Lesedi, Letsatsi communities

WESTERN CAPE

Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Cape Town, Muizenberg, Vredendal, Grabouw, Vrygond, Kuilsriver, Robertson, Parklands, Swellendam

EASTERN CAPE

Gqeberha, Mthatha, Lusikisiki, East London, Coffee Bay, Cabekwana, Dumrana



INTERNATIONAL

Zimbabwe: Gweru, Lupane, Gwanda, Bulawayo, Beitbridge, Harare, Cowdray Park, Mzilikazi, Nkulumane

Mozambique: Maputo, Madjadjane (Matutuine District), Goba Village

Eswatini / Swaziland: Lubombo, Hhohho, Majembeni, Maphungwane

Kenya: Nairobi, Lake Victoria, Masai Mara, Ogiek community, Sengwer community, Endorois community, Homa Bay

Malawi: Active via Participant Media partnership

Namibia: Katutura, Okakara, Otjihenda, Otjinene, Okahandja

5 YEAR AUDIENCE MEMBER REACH

THROUGH THE SPARK
IMPACT PROGRAMME

1,178
TOTAL SCREENINGS

153%
SCREENING GROWTH
OVER 5 YEARS

49,269
AUDIENCE MEMBERS

249%
AUDIENCE GROWTH
OVER 5 YEARS



In 2021/2022

COHORT 1

HOSTED 133 SCREENINGS

TO AN AUDIENCE OF 4,423



In 2022/2023

COHORT 2

HOSTED 148 SCREENINGS

TO AN AUDIENCE OF 5,561

Demonstrating a growth of 11%



In 2023/2024

COHORT 3

HOSTED 256 SCREENINGS

TO AN AUDIENCE OF 10,093

A growth of 73%



In 2024/2025

COHORT 4

HOSTED 304 SCREENINGS

TO AN AUDIENCE OF 13,744

A growth of 19%



In 2025/2026

COHORT 5

HOSTED 337 SCREENINGS

TO AN AUDIENCE OF 15,448

A growth of 11%



MESSAGE FROM THE CO-FOUNDERS

FIVE YEARS OF SPARK

Five years ago with catalytic support from ESquared Investments, we set out with a simple idea.

What if one young person, equipped with a solar-powered cinema, a great African film, and the skills to facilitate meaningful dialogue, could help strengthen an entire community?

In 2021, we launched the Spark Impact Programme with just twenty young people. We hoped they would become facilitators. We hoped they would create conversations. We hoped they would inspire change.

What we didn't anticipate was how those conversations would ripple outward.

Today, Spark has grown into a network of more than one hundred young facilitators across South Africa. Together, they have hosted over 1,100 community screenings, reached nearly 50,000 audience members, and created spaces where people gather to learn, reflect, debate, laugh, and imagine together.

But the numbers only tell part of the story.

Over the past five years, we've realised that Sunshine Cinema isn't really about screening films.

It's about creating the conditions for connection.

Every time a Sunbox opens in a community, something remarkable happens. An ordinary space becomes a place where people come together. Stories spark conversations. Conversations build trust. Trust strengthens communities. And communities begin imagining new possibilities together.

We've come to believe that stories are more than entertainment.

They are bridges.

They connect generations. They connect neighbours. They connect people to new ideas, to each other, and sometimes even to a different future.

That feels more important today than ever before.

Africa is home to the youngest population in the world. Yet young people are navigating rising unemployment, climate uncertainty, rapid technological change, and increasingly fragmented digital lives. While technology continues to transform how we communicate, it cannot replace the sense of belonging that emerges when



people gather in the same place to share an experience.
We believe those moments matter.
Because meaningful change rarely begins with a policy.
It often begins with a conversation.

That belief has shaped everything we've built.

We've invested in young people not simply as programme participants, but as facilitators, entrepreneurs, storytellers, and trusted community leaders. We've watched Spark graduates become conservation advocates, creative professionals, civic educators, campaign facilitators, and business owners. We've seen them create opportunities not only for themselves but for others.

This growth led naturally to the creation of the Impact Facilitator Network supported by The Jobs Fund-our youth-led gig work agency-which connects graduates to meaningful paid opportunities while strengthening local economies through our pay-it-forward model. Every screening creates work. Every facilitator creates opportunities for others. Every partnership extends the impact even further.

Along the way, we've also learned that building an organisation is much like facilitating a conversation. It requires patience, trust, curiosity, adaptability, and the willingness to keep listening.

None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary community of people who have walked this journey with us.

To our facilitators, thank you for your courage and leadership.





To the filmmakers who have entrusted us with your stories, thank you for reminding communities that African stories belong on African screens.

To our partners and funders, thank you for believing in ideas that take time to grow.

And to the communities who continue to welcome us, thank you for showing us that the most powerful stories are the ones created together.

As we look ahead, our ambition has only grown.

We want to build a continent-wide network of young facilitators using African storytelling to create economic opportunity, strengthen communities, and inspire collective action. Through the continued growth of the Impact Facilitator Network, Seeds of Cinema, and new partnerships across Africa, we're excited to keep exploring what cinema can become.

Five years have taught us something profound.

Cinema isn't just a place.

It's a way of bringing people together.

And when people come together around stories, they don't just watch change.

They begin to create it.

With gratitude,

Sydelle Willow Smith & Rowan Pybus

Co-Founders, Sunshine Cinema



FINANCES

R12,713,566

TOTAL INCOME

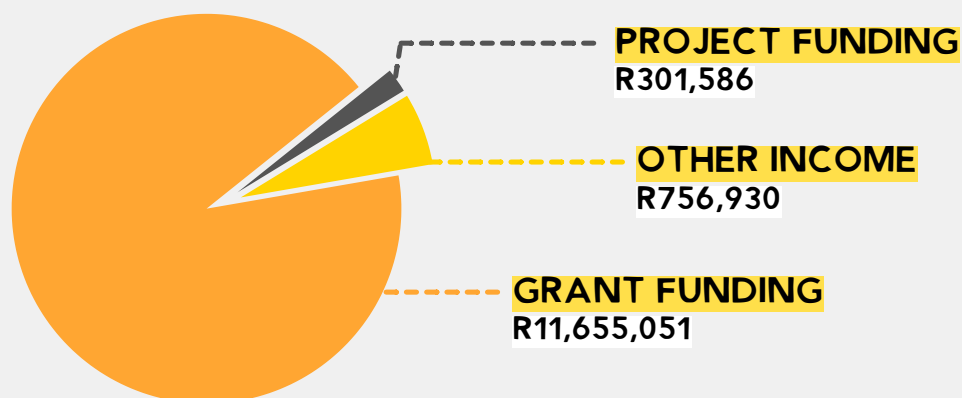
R12,625,058

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

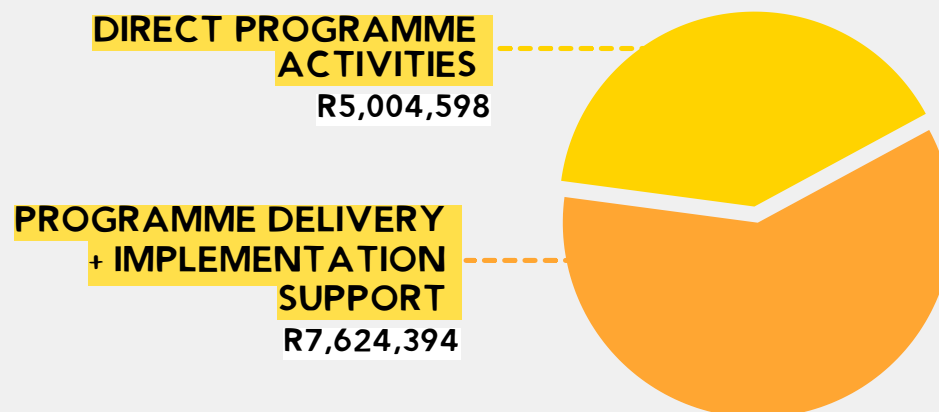
R88,508

YEAR-END SURPLUS

WHERE OUR INCOME CAME FROM



HOW WE INVESTED OUR RESOURCES



WE RAISED R12.7 MILLION AND INVESTED R12.6 MILLION IN ADVANCING OUR MISSION.

Our expenditure supported direct programme activities as well as the people, systems, logistics, monitoring and infrastructure needed to deliver programmes effectively across communities.

REFLECTION FROM THE INTERIM BOARD CHAIR

THE WORK OF HOPE

There is a question every board must be able to answer plainly: what is it, at heart, that our organisation does?

At Sunshine Cinema, the honest answer is not film. It is not even training, though more than 100 young people have now come through five cohorts of the Spark Impact Programme. What we really do is create the conditions for hope, and we have learned that hope grows out of very practical things: a young person being paid for skilled work, a local vendor getting hired, a community talking honestly about its problems and then doing something about them.

Consider what actually happens when a Sunbox arrives in a community. A young facilitator, trained, certified through the University of Cape Town, and paid for their work, sets up a solar-powered cinema in a place the electricity grid, and often the economy, has passed by. Before the film rolls, they have hired local transport, local catering, a local venue. Through our pay-it-forward approach, more than 70 community members across our Spark communities have earned income this way to date. After the film ends, the real work begins: a facilitated conversation about climate resilience, gender justice, youth unemployment, or civic participation. And after that conversation, remarkably

often, comes action. A community garden in Botshabelo. A recycling initiative in Mpumalanga. Rainwater harvesting explored in the Free State. This year alone there were 337 screenings, and 1,178 over five years, reaching nearly 50,000 audience members. Each one is a small act of hope, and together they add up to something much larger.

Why Creative Ecosystems Deserve Investment

Sub-Saharan Africa faces a difficult challenge: far more young people than formal jobs. Conventional responses like infrastructure development and industrial policy are necessary, but they are no longer enough; they treat young people as mere inputs waiting for economic absorption. Creative ecosystems invert that logic by understanding young people as the economy itself. We are starting to see glimpses of this shift in South Africa's Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI), through demand-led digital skilling, the Social Employment Fund, and gig-economy pathways like Sunshine Cinema. The focus is moving toward backing young people as active storytellers, facilitators, entrepreneurs, and employers of others.

This year offered compelling evidence of our work. The Impact Facilitator Network, formalised with the support of the Jobs Fund, now comprises 77 graduates earning income through campaigns with partners including WWF, Open Planet, the UMI Fund, Disney Africa, and The National Geographic Society. Graduates in the Free State like Agnes Mokhele have gone from participants to registered business owners, national media coordinators,

and award winners. Rays of Change took the Spark model across borders for the first time, training facilitators in Mozambique and Eswatini who reached more than 1,100 people across the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area. One of them, Baptista, has already turned that experience into international film work.

When we invest in creative ecosystems, we are funding the connective tissue of society: the spaces where communities gather, deliberate, and decide who they want to become. In an era of fragmentation and misinformation, that connective tissue is as vital as any road or power line. Storytelling is civic infrastructure, and Africa should own its own.

A Steady Ship, A Widening Horizon

As Interim Chair, my mandate this year has been continuity with ambition: keeping the ship steady while the horizon widens. From a governance perspective, I want to note three markers of growth this past year:

First, financial stewardship. Sunshine Cinema is working towards a deliberate diversified income, enterprise support, and long-term sustainability rather than reliance on grants alone.

Second, external validation. Sunshine Cinema's selection as a Rockefeller Foundation Big Bets Fellow for Africa, alongside invitations to Climate Week NYC and the Postane Bertha Accelerator in Istanbul, tells us that our model is being recognised not as a promising experiment but as a credible answer to continental questions.

Third, disciplined growth. The launch of Seeds of Cinema

into the KAZA and Kgalagadi conservation landscapes is an expansion done the right way, built on lessons from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Eswatini about local leadership, language, and trust.

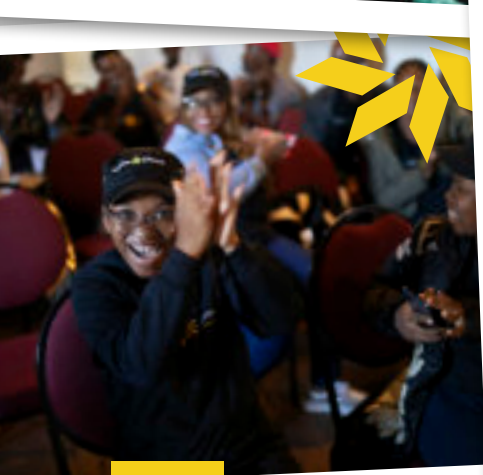
With Gratitude

On behalf of the Board, my first thanks go to the young people at the centre of everything we do: the Sparks, graduates, and Impact Facilitators who carry this work into their communities with skill, courage, and imagination. This report is really their story. I also thank our co-founders, Sydelle Willow Smith and Rowan Pybus, whose vision five years ago has become a movement; our staff, whose work turns intention into impact; and our funders and partners, whose belief makes this work possible.

Five years ago, Sunshine Cinema set out to train twenty young people. Today, a network of storytellers stretches across nine provinces and several countries. We are only getting started.

Faith Pienaar-Ngani,
Interim Board Chair





LETTER FROM A

2025 SPARK

AGNES MOKHELE, BOTSHABELO FREE STATE

When I joined Sunshine Cinema, I was looking for opportunities to create change in my community. What I found was a platform that transformed how I see storytelling - and my own potential.

I come from Botshabelo in the Free State, where many families rely on small-scale farming to survive. Living in a community affected by food insecurity and limited economic opportunities has shaped my passion for food sovereignty, climate justice, and community resilience.

Through Spark, I discovered that storytelling is much more than communication - it is a tool for advocacy and action.

One of the most meaningful parts of my journey has been documenting the stories of farmers whose livelihoods have been affected by climate change. Through photography and storytelling, I have helped amplify their voices, support advocacy efforts, and contribute to mobilising resources for recovery and compensation.

Film screenings also became spaces for creating tangible opportunities. Working with my partner organisation, Lesika Agricultural Cooperative, I helped connect local farmers with new customers, while a screening of *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* at Boitelo Arts Centre inspired

the establishment of a community garden. Through that initiative, ten young people went on to access stipends through the SAAYC Youth Development Programme.

The confidence and experience I gained through Sunshine Cinema opened doors I never imagined. I joined the Rural Women's Assembly South Africa, where I now serve as the National Media Coordinator, while also contributing as a news collector and distributor for the Inyanda Land Movement. To deepen my knowledge of environmental justice, I completed a short course in Introduction to Climate Justice Law and Policy at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Through the SACCI programme, I formally registered my business and secured funding from the Free State Department of Agriculture. I was also deeply honoured to receive the Game Changer in Agriculture Award at the Southern Women in Media Awards.

Looking back, Spark didn't just teach me how to facilitate film screenings.

It showed me that stories can strengthen communities, influence policy, create economic opportunities, and inspire people to act.

Today, I continue to use storytelling as a bridge between people, advocacy, and lasting community change.



CHAPTER 1

THE SPARK SEARCH



This year, 531 young people applied to join the Spark Impact Programme - the highest number of applications Sunshine Cinema has ever received.

For us, this number represents more than growing interest in the programme. **It reflects something much bigger.**

Across South Africa, young people are looking for opportunities to create meaningful work, tell stories that matter, and make a difference in their communities. Spark continues to attract young people who are seeking not only employment, but purpose, connection, and the chance to become leaders where they live.

In a country where youth unemployment remains one of our greatest challenges, we see every application as a reminder that young people are ready to lead when they are trusted with the right tools, training, and opportunities.

Selecting just twenty participants from such a talented pool is never easy.

Our recruitment process is intentionally rigorous, designed to identify young people with strong community roots, a commitment to social impact, and the potential to inspire others.

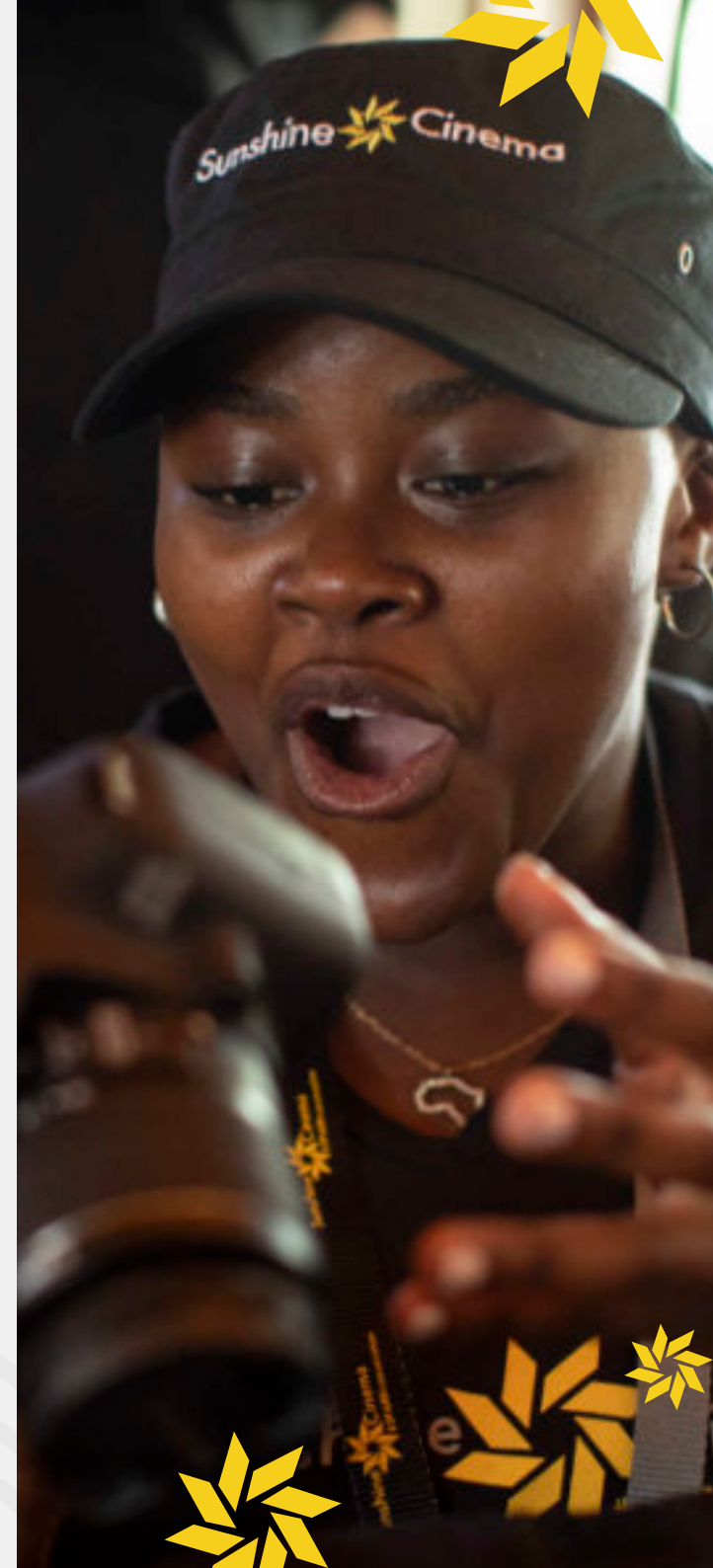
The 2025 cohort represents all nine provinces of South Africa, bringing together young leaders from Mthatha, Botshabelo, QwaQwa, Katlehong, Mamelodi, Manguzi, Pietermaritzburg, Bochum, Mbombela, Lebowakgomo, Bushbuckridge, Kimberley, Mahikeng, Khayelitsha, and Hout Bay.

Each participant brings a unique story, a deep connection to their community, and a shared belief that storytelling can be a catalyst for positive change.

The growth in applications - from 400 in 2024 to 531 in 2025 - is an encouraging sign that young people are seeking new pathways into leadership, entrepreneurship, and the creative economy.

For Sunshine Cinema, this growing demand is both inspiring and humbling. It reminds us that our greatest challenge is no longer finding young leaders.

It is finding the resources to support all those who are ready to become them.





MEET THE 2025  SPARK  IMPACT AMBASSADORS!

THE BOOTCAMP EXPERIENCE

Every Spark journey begins in the same way. Twenty young people from across South Africa arrive as strangers.

Six days later, they leave as facilitators, entrepreneurs, storytellers, and community leaders.

Held from **5–10 May 2025** at Goedgedacht Farm in Malmesbury, the fifth Spark Impact Bootcamp marked more than the start of a new cohort - it celebrated five years of investing in young people and the emergence of a growing community of practice across Southern Africa.

The Bootcamp is designed to do more than teach practical skills.

It creates the confidence, relationships, and sense of purpose that enable young people to return home ready to lead conversations, build partnerships, create work, and strengthen their communities through storytelling.



LEARNING BY DOING

Throughout the week, participants immersed themselves in hands-on training covering:

IMPACT FACILITATION

**PHOTOGRAPHY AND
FILMMAKING**

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**AUDIENCE
ENGAGEMENT**

SUNBOX OPERATIONS

**COMMUNITY
MOBILISATION**

By the end of the programme, every participant had the practical skills - and the confidence - to begin hosting screenings and facilitating community dialogue immediately.





LEARNING FROM THOSE WHO HAVE WALKED THE JOURNEY

As Sunshine Cinema celebrated five years of Spark, this year's Bootcamp was shaped by a powerful milestone.

For the first time, facilitators from every previous Spark cohort returned to help train the next generation.

Former participants who had once sat in the very same sessions came back as mentors, workshop facilitators, and role models - sharing their experiences of building careers,

leading campaigns, creating businesses, and strengthening their communities.

Their presence transformed the Bootcamp into something much more than a training programme.

It became a living demonstration of what is possible when young people are trusted, supported, and given opportunities to grow.



LEADERSHIP BEGINS WITHIN

While practical skills are essential, leadership begins with self-awareness.

Throughout the week, participants were encouraged to reflect on their personal stories, recognise the strengths they already possess, and consider the kind of leaders they want to become.

These moments of reflection sat alongside technical learning, reminding participants that facilitation is not simply about operating equipment or leading discussions.

It is about creating spaces where people feel heard, respected, and connected.



A COMMUNITY OF PARTNERS

The Bootcamp was enriched by long-standing partners and practitioners who generously shared their knowledge and experience.

Sessions were facilitated by:

- Impact Producer **Miki Redelinghuys** and **Dr Liani Maasdorp** (University of Cape Town), exploring impact production and participatory storytelling.
- **Siphokazi Jonas**, award-winning poet and facilitator, guiding participants through storytelling, reflection, and inner leadership.
- The **Trauma and Wellness Centre**, supporting participants to explore wellbeing and trauma-informed facilitation.
- **Phelo Muyanga**, facilitating conversations on mental health, resilience, and self-care.

Bringing warmth, humour, and boundless energy to the week was Nthabiseng Mogashoa, a graduate of the 2023 Spark cohort, who returned as Master of Ceremonies.

Her journey - from participant to facilitator - beautifully embodied the long-term vision of Spark: young leaders investing in the next generation.



Filmmaker **Miki Redelinghuys**, known for **Mother City** and **This Land**, shares her expertise with Spark Impact Ambassadors at the Spark Bootcamp in her role as UCT Impact Course Convenor.





READY TO BEGIN

At the end of the week, each facilitator received a Sunbox - Africa's first solar-powered mobile cinema kit - along with a digital media starter pack.

More than equipment, these tools represent trust.

They signal the beginning of a new chapter, equipping facilitators to return home and immediately begin hosting screenings, creating opportunities, and leading conversations within their communities.

As one cohort graduated into the Impact Facilitator Network and another prepared to begin its journey, one thing became clear.

Spark is no longer simply a training programme.

It is a growing movement of young people who are using African storytelling to create livelihoods, strengthen communities, and build a more connected future.





THE SPARK IMPACT JOURNEY

The Spark programme is designed as a journey that supports young people from learning to leadership.

BOOTCAMP

Participants begin with an immersive week of training and receive a digital media starter pack and Sunbox to launch their facilitation journey.

LEARN BY DOING

Facilitators complete digital media, entrepreneurship, facilitation, and impact production training while receiving mentorship from Sunshine Cinema and programme alumni.

UNIVERSITY LEARNING

Participants complete the University of Cape Town's Impact Facilitator course, building practical skills in participatory facilitation and community engagement.

COMMUNITY SCREENINGS

From August to January, facilitators host film screenings and community dialogues, applying their learning in real-world settings while completing programme milestones.

GRADUATION

Facilitators who successfully complete the course, screenings, and gig work graduate from Spark and retain their digital media starter pack, enabling them to continue earning income and creating impact in their communities.

IMPACT FACILITATOR NETWORK

Top-performing graduates are invited to join Sunshine Cinema's **Impact Facilitator Network**, gaining access to paid facilitation opportunities, professional development, and ongoing mentorship.





The Sunshine Cinema UCT course offers an extraordinary opportunity for its participants to engage with film as a tool for social change. The course over the past 5 years has seen students from all across the world, come together to share their knowledge and experiences. Although strictly conducted online, students are able to connect and share the way in which we can use film as a tool for impact. I have witnessed the course help build confidence in students from underprivileged backgrounds and provide clear strategies to already established filmmakers. Over the past 5 years the course has brought experts in the industry from various organisations to share valuable resources for students to access even once the course is complete. This course offers both practical and personal development, one I would highly recommend.

HEAD COURSE TUTOR AT UCT: THIHANGWI RAMUTSINDELA



CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT FACILITATOR NETWORK

FROM TRAINING TO OPPORTUNITY



Over the past five years, Sunshine Cinema has learned an important lesson.

Training alone is not enough.

Young people don't just need skills - they need opportunities to apply them, earn an income, build professional networks, and gain real experience.

The **Impact Facilitator Network** (IFN) was created to bridge that gap.

Building on the success of the Spark Impact Programme, the IFN connects graduates to paid facilitation opportunities through Sunshine Cinema's growing network of partners. It transforms training into

livelihoods by creating pathways into the creative, impact, and green economies.

Today, Spark graduates are working as facilitators, media entrepreneurs, community organisers, campaign leaders, and creative professionals - using storytelling to create both social impact and economic opportunity.

Supported by the South African Treasury Jobs Fund and strategic partners, the IFN responds to one of South Africa's greatest challenges: youth unemployment. Rather than waiting for jobs to emerge, the network equips young people with the practical experience, professional relationships, and confidence to build meaningful careers while strengthening the communities they serve.

Since its formalisation, the IFN has become a growing national network of trusted facilitators delivering campaigns on issues including climate resilience, conservation, youth employment, gender equality, public health, media literacy, and active citizenship.

Most importantly, the network creates value at every level: Young people gain paid work, practical experience, and professional confidence. Communities gain trusted spaces for dialogue and learning. Partners gain skilled facilitators with deep local relationships.

And local economies benefit through Sunshine Cinema's pay-it-forward model, which prioritises local suppliers, venues, transport providers, creatives, caterers, and community organisations.

As the world of work continues to evolve, Sunshine Cinema is investing in the skills that matter most: communication, facilitation, creativity, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and community leadership.

These are the human skills that technology cannot replace.

A woman with dark skin, wearing a black cap and a black t-shirt, is speaking into a silver microphone. Her right hand is raised in a gesture. The background is a blurred blue and white banner with some text, including "SNEP" and "Africa".

"Being part of the Spark Graduate Programme through IFN has been the most rewarding part of my journey - it has allowed me to earn a living doing work I love while making a real difference in communities. Through IFN, I've been able to create jobs for fellow graduates and open doors of opportunity for them. This platform truly transforms livelihoods and fosters entrepreneurship for communities on a broader scale."

- NTHABISENG MOTSHWENENG. IFN MEMBER (WC)

"Gig work is more than temporary employment; it creates opportunities, builds sustainable creative careers, and bridges the gap between unemployment and long-term success. As a freelancer for nearly a decade, I've seen how gig work strengthens portfolios, expands networks, and opens doors to future collaborations, proving that every opportunity can be a stepping stone to lasting impact."

- NONDUMISO MADLALA. IFN MEMBER (KZN)

CREATING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH GIG WORK

One of the clearest indicators of the Spark Impact Programme's success is the meaningful income generated by graduates.

Since 2021, Spark facilitators have earned more than **R2 million** through programme opportunities, independent creative work, and Impact Facilitator Network campaigns.

This demonstrates Sunshine Cinema's commitment to moving beyond skills development and creating real pathways into the creative economy.

The impact extends beyond individual facilitators.

Every campaign creates opportunities for local photographers, caterers, drivers, translators, designers, venues, and community organisations - ensuring that investment circulates within the communities where screenings take place.

R2.1 MILLION

**GENERATED
THROUGH YOUTH-
LED GIG WORK**



70+

**INFORMAL JOBS
CREATED THROUGH
LOCAL PROCUREMENT**

STORYTELLING IN ACTION



The Impact Facilitator Network demonstrates that storytelling can do far more than raise awareness.

By combining African films with facilitated dialogue, our partners are able to engage communities in meaningful conversations that inspire participation, strengthen relationships, and encourage locally led action.

During 2025, IFN facilitators delivered campaigns across South Africa in partnership with organisations working in conservation, climate resilience, youth development, and environmental education.

OPEN PLANET

CONNECTING CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

10

WORKSHOPS

354

PARTICIPANTS

6

PROVINCES

Through our partnership with **Open Planet**, Impact Facilitators explored the relationship between climate change and community health using a curated collection of short films by emerging South African filmmakers.

Rather than presenting climate change as a distant scientific issue, facilitators connected environmental challenges to people's everyday lives - from flooding and drought to food security, pollution, and public health.

The screenings became spaces where communities shared local knowledge, reflected on environmental change, and identified practical responses including community clean-ups, waste management initiatives, and local awareness campaigns.

The partnership reinforced a simple belief:

When communities gather around stories, complex issues become accessible, local knowledge is valued, and people are more likely to act together.



"Attending Ayanda's global warming workshop gave me a deeper understanding of how climate change is affecting our planet. It challenged me to think differently about how our everyday actions impact the environment."

- RAYMOND DIEMENG, NORTHERN CAPE



UMI FUND

BUILDING A YOUTH-LED CLIMATE MOVEMENT

15

SCREENINGS

724

PARTICIPANTS

9

PROVINCES

The UMI Fund partnership asked a simple question:

What happens when young people are trusted to lead climate conversations in their own communities?

The answer was a nationwide campaign where 25 Impact Facilitators connected global climate challenges with local realities.

Communities discussed water security, conservation, renewable energy, food systems, and environmental justice while identifying practical actions such as community gardens, recycling initiatives, rainwater harvesting, and awareness campaigns.

More than a climate campaign, it demonstrated that young people are not simply future environmental leaders. **They are leading today.**

We are proud to continue working with UMI fund in 2026.



"Attending the screening inspired me to think more clearly about the direction of our youth organisation. I left feeling optimistic about starting environmental projects in schools and continuing to learn through Sunshine Cinema."

- ZUKO SELANI, EASTERN CAPE

DISNEY AFRICA & NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

FROM LOCAL SCREENINGS TO REGIONAL CONSERVATION

12

SCREENINGS

1,061

PARTICIPANTS

What began as a film partnership has grown into something much bigger.

Building on our 2024 collaboration with **Disney Africa**, Sunshine Cinema partnered with **National Geographic** during the International Explorers Festival to bring conservation storytelling into communities across South Africa.

Using Sunbox mobile cinemas, facilitators helped children, young people, and educators connect global environmental stories with local conservation challenges.

The campaign inspired community clean-ups, recycling projects, environmental awareness activities, and youth-led conservation initiatives while creating valuable professional opportunities for Impact Facilitators.

For graduates like **Kyle Vernon Hendricks**, these partnerships have opened doors far beyond individual campaigns.



"The opportunities I've received through the IFN have been incredible. Working with Disney and the National Geographic Society has helped me grow my business, strengthen my skills, and connect with changemakers across Africa."

- KYLE HENDRICKS, IMPACT FACILITATOR



DISNEY AFRICA &
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
CAMPAIGN GALLERY



"The film screening showed me the power of bringing communities together through storytelling. It reminded me how important it is to ensure rural communities have access to meaningful educational opportunities that encourage curiosity and a deeper connection with nature."

- MBALI NTULI, KZN AUDIENCE

LOOKING AHEAD

The Impact Facilitator Network represents Sunshine Cinema's evolution from a training programme into a youth-led employment ecosystem.

By combining storytelling, facilitation, entrepreneurship, and strategic partnerships, we are creating pathways into meaningful work while strengthening communities across Southern Africa.

Every facilitator trained.

Every campaign delivered.

Every story shared.

Creates another opportunity for someone else.

Audience members at a Disney / National Geographic Society screening, in Grabouw in the Western Cape, SA.

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL WORK



Audience Members at The Friendship Bench Screening in Matebeleland North, Zimbabwe.

STORIES CROSS BORDERS

At Sunshine Cinema, we've learned that while borders separate countries, they don't separate people.

Across Southern Africa, communities face many of the same challenges - youth unemployment, climate change, gender inequality, limited access to cultural infrastructure, and shrinking civic spaces.

They also share something equally important: stories.

Stories create connection across languages, cultures, and generations. They help communities reflect on shared challenges, celebrate local knowledge, and imagine new possibilities together.

As Sunshine Cinema has grown, so too has our ambition.

We're no longer asking how mobile cinema can strengthen communities in South Africa.

We're exploring how a youth-led storytelling model can strengthen communities across the region.

This chapter highlights two milestones on that journey: our continued work in **Zimbabwe** and **Rays of Change: Imisebe Yekushintja**, our first cross-border facilitator programme in the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that while every community is unique, the need to gather, reflect, and learn together is universal.



ZIMBABWE

STORIES THAT HEAL, CONNECT AND INSPIRE DIALOGUE

Leading Sunshine Cinema's work in Zimbabwe has reaffirmed my belief that storytelling creates spaces where communities can come together around conversations that matter.

Across every screening, I witnessed young people, elders, community leaders, and local organisations engaging in honest dialogue about mental health, governance, gender equality, peacebuilding, and social inclusion.

Film became much more than a communication tool.

It became a catalyst for empathy, participation, and healing.

One of the most memorable moments came during a screening of *The Friendship Bench*, when the grandmothers featured in the documentary watched themselves on screen for the very first time.

Seeing their pride and emotion reminded us that storytelling doesn't only educate audiences.

It honours lived experience.

It celebrates local leadership.

And it reminds communities that their own stories matter.

Working in Zimbabwe also reinforced an important lesson.

Meaningful regional work requires patience, trust, strong local partnerships, and the humility to learn alongside communities.

These lessons continue to shape how Sunshine Cinema grows.

BY NOBUHLE PRETTY NXUMALO

ZIMBABWE PROJECT MANAGER



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
CAPE TOWN

The
StoryBoard
Collective

movies
that
matter

THE FRIENDSHIP BENCH
ZIMBABWE



PROGRAMME REACH

PROJECT	SCREENINGS	AUDIENCE	LOCATIONS
HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG	6	226	BULAWAYO, GWANDA, LUPANE
THE FRIENDSHIP BENCH WITH STORYBOARD COLLECTIVE	4	200	HARARE, LUPANE, BULAWAYO, GWANDA
MOVIES THAT MATTER	7	248	BULAWAYO, LUPANE, GWANDA



"I had started losing my children due to mental health challenges and became depressed myself. Through the support of fellow counsellors, I found healing. My advice is simple: even those who help others need space to share their own struggles."

- GRANDMOTHER PEER COUNSELLOR, HARARE

RAYS OF CHANGE

★ IMISEBE YEKUSHINTJA

WHEN CONSERVATION CROSSES BORDERS

What happens when young people from different countries come together around a shared landscape?

Rays of Change marked Sunshine Cinema's first structured regional facilitator programme, bringing together young leaders from **Mozambique and Eswatini** to explore how storytelling can strengthen conservation, climate resilience, and community participation across the **Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area**.

The programme represented an important milestone. It demonstrated that while borders define countries, they do not define ecosystems, communities, or the environmental challenges people face.

Over four days, participants received intensive training in:

- Impact facilitation
- Community engagement
- Digital storytelling
- Conservation communication
- Mobile cinemav

Each facilitator received a **Sunbox**, laptop, and camera, giving them the tools to continue leading screenings and documenting local stories long after the programme ended.



Alongside practical training, every participant successfully completed the University of Cape Town's Impact Screening Facilitator Course, strengthening their facilitation and community engagement skills.

As facilitators returned to their communities, they hosted screenings and Spark Conversations that explored climate resilience, conservation, youth leadership, sustainable livelihoods, and gender equality.

Across languages and cultures, one message remained constant.

Communities wanted opportunities to learn from one another.

Over the course of the programme, **25 screenings reached 1,100+ audience members across the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area.**

The programme demonstrated something we've long believed:

Conservation is not only about protecting landscapes.

It is about investing in the people who call those landscapes home.



RAYS OF CHANGE

4

YOUNG
FACILITATORS

2

COUNTRIES

25

COMMUNITY
SCREENINGS

1,100+

AUDIENCE
MEMBERS

100%

UCT COURSE
GRADUATION



"Working with Sunshine Cinema opened new opportunities for me. Today I'm building my skills in wildlife filmmaking so I can use storytelling to support conservation in Mozambique."

- BAPTISTA BISQUETE, 2026 RAYS OF CHANGE GRADUATE + HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS + VISUAL MEDIA, MAPUTO NATIONAL PARK



LOOKING AHEAD

Zimbabwe and Rays of Change represent more than successful regional programmes.

They demonstrate that Sunshine Cinema's model is adaptable across different countries, cultures, and contexts.

As we prepare to expand through Seeds of Cinema, these partnerships have strengthened our belief that African stories can connect communities across borders while creating opportunities for young leaders to shape the future of the region.

Stories travel.

So do ideas.

So do young leaders.

And together, they are helping build a more connected, resilient, and hopeful Southern Africa.



CHAPTER 4

FROM LOCAL STORIES TO GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS

Sunshine Cinema began with a simple belief: that stories can bring communities together.

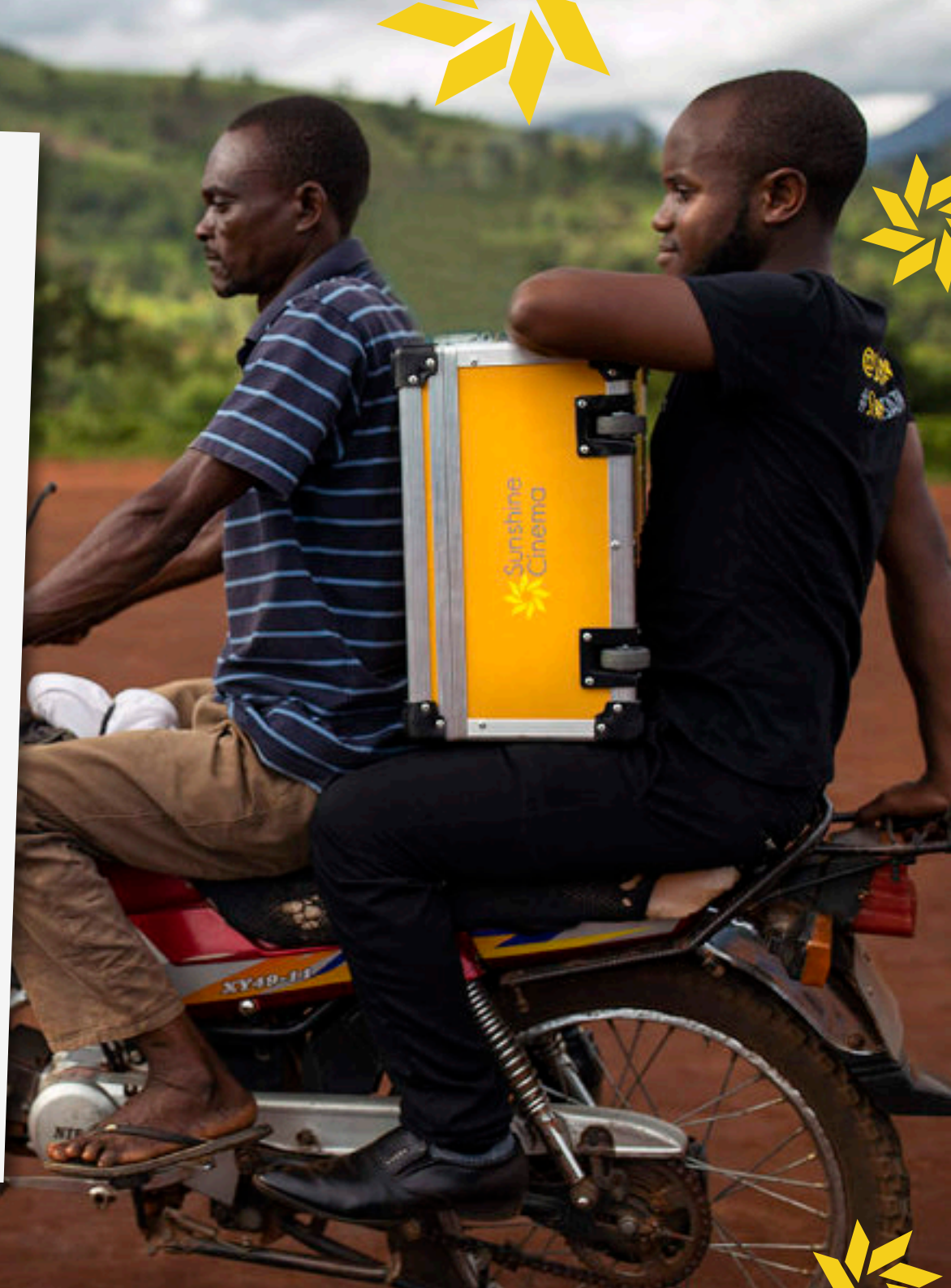
As our work grows, we've discovered something equally important.

Stories also travel.

Over the past year, the ideas emerging from community screenings across Southern Africa have increasingly found their way into international conversations about youth employment, conservation, alternative film distribution, civic participation, and community-led development.

Supported by the International Resource for Storytelling and Impact (IRIS), Sunshine Cinema participated in fellowships, film markets, festivals, and global convenings that allowed us to share what we're learning while learning from others.

These opportunities strengthened new partnerships, expanded our regional network, and reinforced our belief that the future of African storytelling depends not only on making great films-but on ensuring they reach communities, create livelihoods, and inspire action.



GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS

★ DURBAN FILMMART

Durban FilmMart continues to be one of Africa's most important gathering places for filmmakers, distributors, impact producers, and cultural organisations.

For Sunshine Cinema, supported by IRIS to contribute to conversations around **alternative distribution**, **audience development**, and **community exhibition**-sharing how mobile cinema can connect African films with audiences beyond traditional cinema infrastructure.

These conversations continue to strengthen Sunshine Cinema's role as a bridge between African filmmakers and African communities.



★ CLIMATE WEEK NYC

Supported by IRIS and the UMI Fund, Sunshine Cinema joined Climate Week New York alongside organisations including GroundWork and the ClimateWorks Foundation.

While many climate conversations focus on finance, technology, and policy, Sunshine Cinema contributed a different perspective:

Community participation matters.

We shared how storytelling, trusted facilitators, and community dialogue can strengthen climate resilience by helping people connect global environmental challenges with local action.

The relationships developed during Climate Week continue to shape our growing conservation work, including Seeds of Cinema.



ISTANBUL

POSTANE BERTHA ACCELERATOR

Supported by IRIS and the UMI Fund, Sunshine Cinema joined the **Postane Bertha Accelerator**, bringing together social entrepreneurs from around the world.

The programme created valuable space to reflect on organisational growth, systems thinking, leadership, and long-term sustainability.

Perhaps the greatest lesson was this:

Although communities live in different countries, many are asking the same questions about belonging, participation, opportunity, and the future.





MOLESKINE FOUNDATION

THE LIVING LANGUAGE OF REPAIR

In November 2025, Impact Coordinator Refilwe Chiloane joined Creativity Pioneers from around the world at the Living Language of Repair retreat in Johannesburg.

The gathering explored creativity as a practice of healing, dialogue, and social transformation.

Sunshine Cinema also facilitated a workshop during the inaugural **Joburg Revival**, sharing our facilitation methodology with artists, filmmakers, and practitioners from around the world.

The experience reinforced something we deeply believe:

Meaningful change begins with relationships.



COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

THROUGH CINEMA

THE GRAB SCREENING TOUR, ZAMBIA

In November 2025, Sunshine Cinema Regional Youth Manager **Nonkululeko Mputi**, a graduate of the Spark Impact Programme, travelled to Serenje, Zambia, to facilitate community screenings of the award-winning documentary *The Grab*. The screenings explored themes of land rights, conservation, environmental justice, and displacement through facilitated community dialogue.

More than **150 people** from **Miseshi, Nyamanda Forest, and Kashishi** participated in the screenings despite the challenges of remote locations, limited infrastructure, and language barriers. Each community brought its own perspective to the discussions, with conversations ranging from legal protections against land dispossession to indigenous conservation knowledge and sustainable land management practices.

The initiative demonstrated the power of locally facilitated impact cinema to create trusted spaces for dialogue, learning, and civic participation. By connecting global environmental issues with local lived experience, the screenings reinforced Sunshine Cinema's commitment to empowering communities through storytelling and meaningful conversation.

The Grab screening tour was supported by The Storyboard Collective, with special thanks to Nate Halverson (The Center for Investigative Reporting) and Brigadier Siachitema (Southern African Litigation Centre).





BUILDING GLOBAL SOUTH DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

One of the most significant developments this year was the strengthening of relationships with alternative distribution networks across the Global South.

Through exchanges with practitioners across Southern Africa, East Africa, and Latin America, Sunshine Cinema explored new approaches to audience development, mobile cinema, and community engagement.

Across every conversation, one idea emerged again and again.

Audiences are not passive consumers of stories.

They are active participants in shaping culture, strengthening democracy, and building community.

Those exchanges continue to inform how we think about the future of African cinema - and how stories reach the people who need them most.



LOOKING AHEAD

The relationships built throughout 2025 have strengthened our confidence that Sunshine Cinema's model resonates far beyond the communities where screenings take place.

That confidence was affirmed in early 2026 when Co-Founder Sydelle Willow Smith was selected as one of The Rockefeller Foundation's Big Bets Fellows for Africa, recognising organisations developing ambitious, systems-level responses to some of the continent's most pressing challenges.

For us, this recognition is not an endpoint, but an invitation to think even bigger.

Over the past five years, we've learned that cinema is never just about the film - it is about what happens when people gather.

A screening becomes a conversation, a conversation builds trust, trust creates connection, and connection creates the conditions for communities to imagine, and build, a different future together.

We've watched young people become facilitators, entrepreneurs, conservation champions, educators, filmmakers, and community leaders. We've seen stories create livelihoods, conversations strengthen communities, and partnerships grow into movements - and it's taught us that while technology continues to transform our world; **the human skills that build trust, empathy, creativity, and collaboration have never been more valuable.**

As Sunshine Cinema expands through Seeds of Cinema across SADC in 2026, strengthens the Impact Facilitator Network, and deepens partnerships across Africa, we remain committed to one simple belief:

Stories are bridges - they connect people across generations, across cultures, across borders, and across possibilities.

What began with a single solar-powered cinema kit has become something much bigger: A growing network of young leaders using African stories to create opportunity, strengthen communities, and imagine a more connected continent.

The first five years showed us what is possible. The next five will be about building a continent-wide movement where young people don't just share stories - **they use them to shape Africa's future.**



MEET THE TEAM

REFILWE CHILOANE

REGIONAL IMPACT
COORDINATOR

SHANNA FREEDMAN

FINANCIAL MANAGER

SIMONE ARENDSE

OPERATION + FINANCE
COORDINATOR

SHANNON O'SHEA

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

MATSHEPO KHUMALO

JUNIOR COMMUNICATIONS
+ MARKETING

NONKULULEKO MPUTI

REGIONAL YOUTH MANAGER

QHAMANI XAMENI

OFFICE PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

ROWAN PYBUS

CO-FOUNDER + CREATIVE
DIRECTOR

SYDELLE WILLOW

SMITH

CO-FOUNDER +
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NOZIPHO SWELINDAWO

IFN COORDINATOR

MEET THE BOARD



FAITH PIENAAR

KGABO LEGODI



OSAGYEFO MAZWAI

STEPHANIE BOUSERI



LLEWELLYN FREDRICKS



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THANK YOU!

YOU MADE IT HAPPEN!



BERTHA
FOUNDATION



Stella and Paul
Lowenstein Trust





NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

STORIES ARE BRIDGES.

**AND EVERY SCREENING IS THE
BEGINNING OF A NEW ONE.**

