

A JOURNEY

*Unscripted*



25 YEARS OF FILMAID'S  
PIONEERING STORYTELLING WORK

FilmAid

# Dear Friends,

**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, FILMAID WAS BORN FROM A POWERFUL IDEA:** that film could do more than entertain. It could heal, empower, and transform lives. In 1999, we began with screenings for refugees in Kosovo, bringing together divided people who had lost so much during the Balkan wars through the power of storytelling. Since then, our mission has grown beyond what we could have ever imagined — and as I reflect on how far we've come, I couldn't be prouder of our evolution and impact.

From refugee camps in Kenya to Indigenous communities in Colombia, FilmAid has dedicated itself to amplifying voices that often go unheard. Throughout our history, we've worked alongside some of the world's most vulnerable communities — not just **showing stories** but **building space for local stories to be told**. By training local filmmakers, mentoring young creatives, and supporting powerful local narratives, we're ensuring that the people we serve have the tools to tell their own truths.

A vital part of our journey has been our commitment to adapt with every technological shift. We've done so at a time of incredibly fast change in the world of media and information. From using old-school generators to project films on the side of the famous "FilmAid truck" to leveraging today's digital storytelling platforms, we have evolved to meet the challenges and possibilities of each new era. Today, we see visual storytelling as one of the most influential forms of communication in our interconnected world — and yet again, we're pioneering new ways for communities to share their stories across boundaries and identities.

Since joining forces with Internews a few years ago, our reach has expanded even further, immersing FilmAid's work in a global network that spans over 100+ countries. Together, we are amplifying local voices on a global stage, contributing to a world where everyone, everywhere, has the ability to produce and access good quality information.

As we celebrate this 25-year milestone, I want to reaffirm our commitment to this mission. Authoritarianism is on the rise, crises are spilling over borders, and many of us are directly experiencing a starkly polarized world where even a shared definition of truth seems out of reach. The world needs stories that bridge these deep divides, challenge our assumptions, and inspire mutual empathy. And we deeply believe that the communities we serve deserve the chance to tell those stories themselves — because stories are power.

Whether you were there in '99 or you just met us — thank you for being a part of this journey.

With gratitude and hope,

**Gita Saedi Kiely**  
*Director, FilmAid*

# OUR *Impact*



SINCE FILMAID JOINED INTERNEWS IN 2021, WE HAVE WORKED IN 34 COUNTRIES AND HAVE SUPPORTED **OVER 150 COMMUNITY-LED FILMS**. FILMAID RUNS UP TO 15 PROGRAMS PER YEAR, AND THIS INCLUDES STAND-ALONE FILMAID POP-UPS AS WELL AS PROGRAMS EMBEDDED IN LARGER, MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMS. WITH OUR GROWING BODY OF QUALITY WORK, WE EXPECT TO PRESENT FILMAID PROJECTS AT FESTIVALS AND CONFERENCES **ACROSS THE GLOBE**.

# OUR *Story*

*1999:* FilmAid is founded by Golden Globe-winning film producer Caroline Baron with one idea in mind: to connect people, amplify local voices, and bring joy to marginalized communities through the magic of film.

+ FilmAid launches its first initiative, film screenings for refugee communities in Kosovo. Initial screenings include Charlie Chaplin films and Tom and Jerry cartoons.

*2000:* The International Rescue Committee adopts FilmAid and launches a six-month program in Guinea.

*2001:* FilmAid Kenya is established. It becomes part of Kenya's Refugee Operation led by a consortium of agencies, including UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme. The Operation delivers life-saving information in 13 languages to over 400,000 refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities.

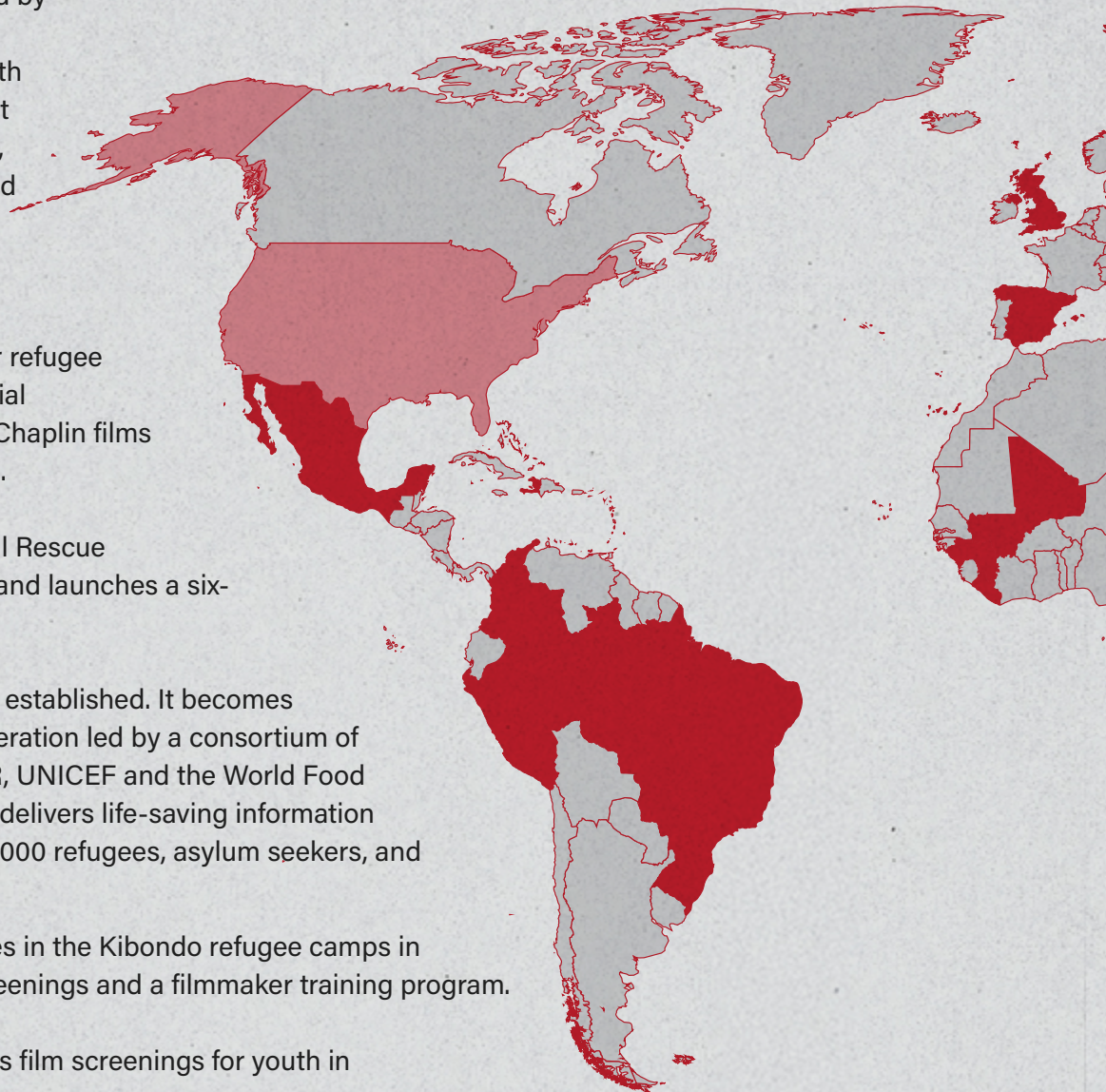
+ FilmAid launches activities in the Kibondo refugee camps in Tanzania. These include screenings and a filmmaker training program.

*2002:* FilmAid launches film screenings for youth in Kabul, Afghanistan.

*2004:* FilmAid Kenya's work expands to the Dadaab refugee camps, near the border with Somalia.

*2005:* FilmAid works in Louisiana, USA, with people displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

*2006:* FilmAid Kenya presents the inaugural FilmAid Film Festival.



*2009:* FilmAid launches film screenings and filmmaker training programs in Thailand, establishing a presence in the Mae La refugee camp, near the border with Myanmar.

*2010:* Following the catastrophic January earthquake, FilmAid launches programs for internally displaced people in Haiti.

*2015:* FilmAid partners with UNHCR and Save the Children to conduct mobile screenings across Jordan, delivering critical health and safety information to Syrian refugees.

*2019:* At its annual gala, FilmAid announces the merger with Internews, the world's largest media support nonprofit.

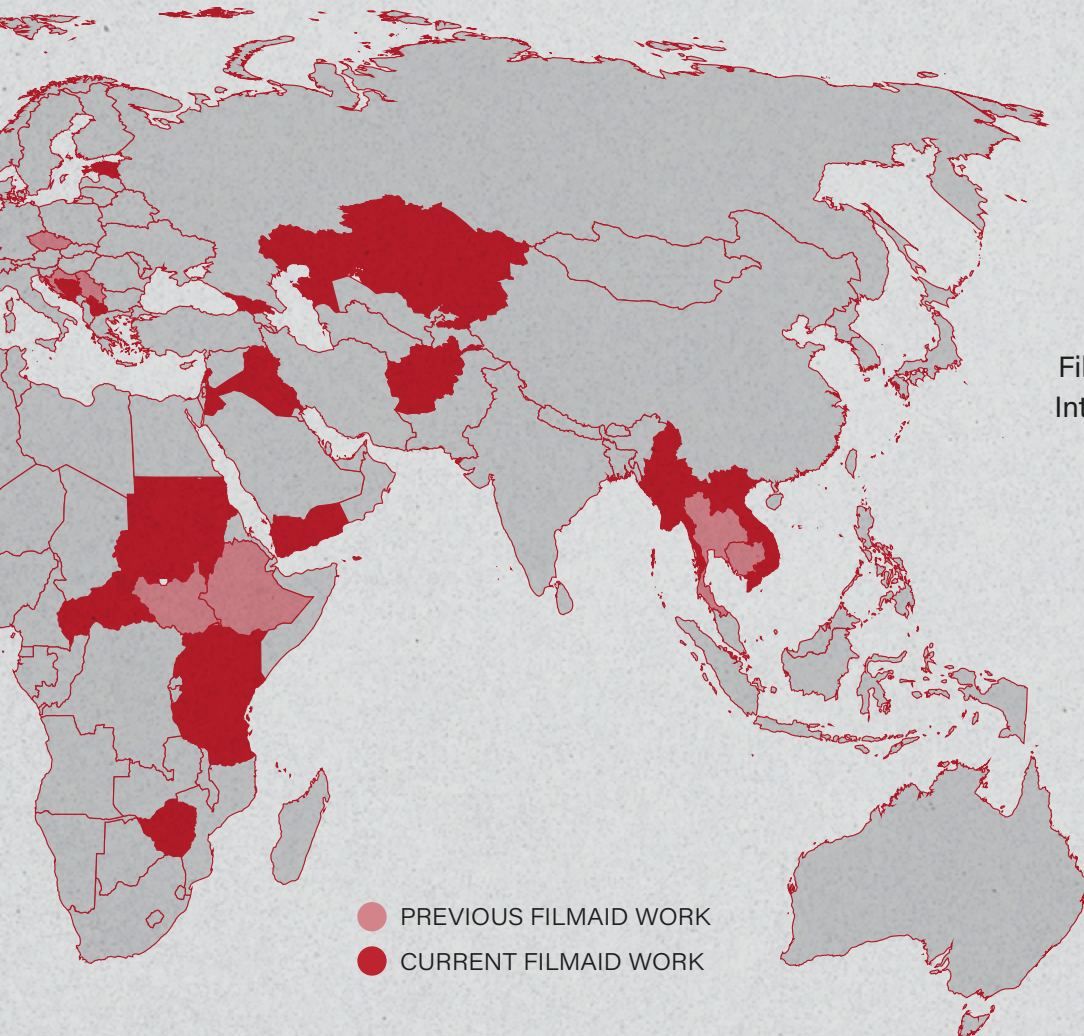
*2021 – Present:* FilmAid drastically expands its reach, conducting filmmaker training and other initiatives in 34 countries across 4 continents.

*2023:* FilmAid launches the FilmAid Network, a global community of industry makers, funders, and supporters with the aim to connect people and share learning.

## *Present*

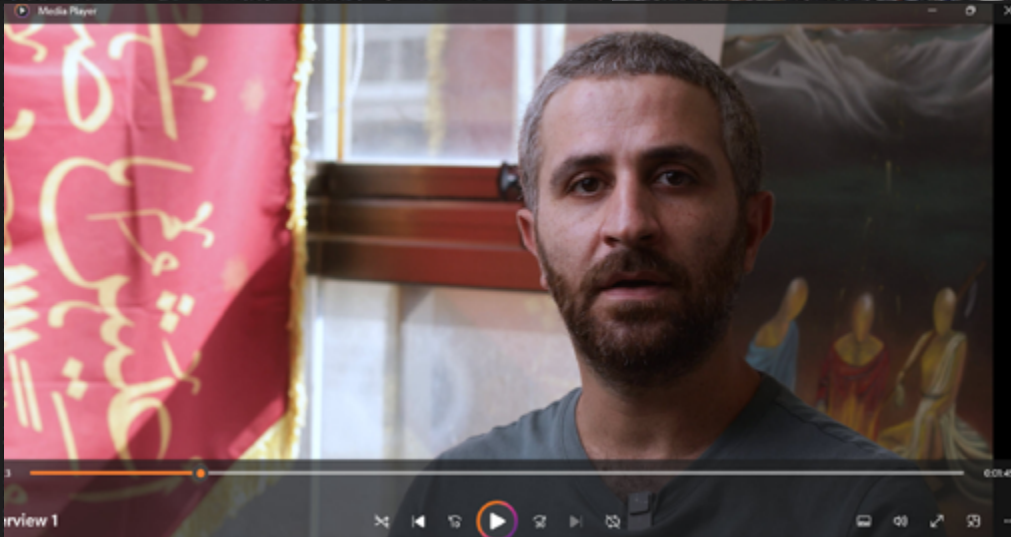
In 2025, FilmAid will further develop resources and methodology for both onsite and online offerings, as well as grow the membership and value of the FilmAid Network program. We will continue to offer training and practices that use film to reinforce information integrity in dozens of underserved communities around the world.

By 2026, a thriving FilmAid with global partners will extend our funding, mentorship, and screening opportunities. With our growing body of quality work, we will present FilmAid projects and protocols at festivals and conferences across the globe.



# FILMAID


## Pop-Ups



FilmAid Pop-Ups are short-term, experimental projects that support the production of an independent film — as well as contributing to the development of online courses to train filmmakers in the future.

One remarkable FilmAid Pop-Up in Lebanon showcases the unique artistry of filmmaker Youssef Khourey. His film *Discarded Dreams* provides a poignant exploration of Lebanon's waste crisis by capturing how his discarded artwork — beautiful paintings left in city trash bins — moved through the urban waste system. The film expresses powerful social commentary on environmental issues affecting the lives of millions. FilmAid's support enabled Khourey to bring this story to life, creating a conversation piece that unites communities beyond the realm of traditional news through public screenings and events.

Through FilmAid Pop-Ups, we amplify community-driven narratives and empower local filmmakers to reach audiences far and wide. In 2025, the storytelling legacy of *Garbage Dreams* will continue, as FilmAid Pop-Ups' films, along with the attached filmmaking course, screen globally.



*“The first step to solving any problem is to talk about it. So, if my film opens this door for people to talk, [...] it helps create a diverse and rich society.”*

— OMAR KHALED

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT, LEBANON

# DOCUMENTARY FILM & MEDIA LITERACY *in Moldova*

2024 Camp & Screening





In October 2024, outside the city of Chisinau, Moldova, eleven young people from diverse Moldovan communities gathered for an extraordinary experience at the FilmAid Documentary Camp. This week-long intensive film camp, funded by the Dutch Embassy, was part of the MELON project — Media Education and Literacy and Optimization of Newsrooms, a multi-year initiative supported by USAID with the aim to increase media literacy and quality media in Russian. The camp's mission was simple but powerful: to empower youth to tell their own stories, cultivate media literacy, and strengthen Moldovan voices in the global media landscape.

Partnering with the Chisinau Youth Media Center, we created an environment where participants felt at home expressing themselves. These young filmmakers represented Moldova's rich diversity, hailing from Bulgarian, Romanian, Transnistrian, and Ukrainian backgrounds. Over five days, they explored documentary storytelling, learning how to develop characters, master camera work, and refine interviewing techniques — all while grounding their work in ethical filmmaking practices. One focus was on media literacy, helping these youth navigate questions around archival footage and the challenges of authenticity in the age of AI.

Midway through the camp, we switched to practice: the young people shared stories rooted in Moldovan culture, producing short films that captured the essence of local folklore, cultural identity, and football. On the last day, they screened their works, celebrating a week of collaboration, creativity, and self-expression. For many, this is just the beginning; several participants left eager to further develop and polish their films, hoping to capture the soul of Moldova through their unique lenses.

With programs like MELON, we support a new generation of filmmakers in amplifying their voices, creating healthy information ecosystems in the process.


# OUR MEKONG, *Our Story*



In partnership with Internews' Earth Journalism Network, we launched *Our Mekong, Our Say* — a program to empower community filmmakers to share critical stories from the Mekong River region. We brought together 25 talented filmmakers from Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam, offering them training, funding, and mentorship to create authentic films that reflect the challenges faced by people on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

Together, the filmmakers produced 10 compelling short films highlighting the struggles and resilience of communities in the Mekong, capturing the voices, concerns, and stories of individuals living in this ecologically diverse yet vulnerable region.

We hosted 18 impact screenings, attended by over 3,000 people. These gatherings sparked discussions about environmental issues and inspired action to protect the Mekong, creating a platform for local voices to advocate for their land, water, and future.



*“[Thanks to our movie,] Local NGOs and academics started to pay more attention to the environmental and political issues of Mekong Island.*

— VISARUT SANKHAM  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER, THAILAND

# DE COSTA *a Costa*



Our ***De Costa a Costa*** Festival in Colombia brought together Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities from the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. Designed to empower local voices, the festival included workshops, film screenings, and hands-on training that encouraged people to tell their own stories through film. With support from local partners and our parent organization, Internews, we reached groups that are rarely involved in initiatives like this one, creating a platform for authentic narratives to be shared and celebrated.

During the festival, participants crafted short films exploring cultural heritage, local challenges, and everyday life. These stories ranged from Colombian folklore to deeply personal accounts, providing a window into the unique identities that compose Colombian society. For many participants, it was an opportunity to see themselves represented on screen for the first time — an experience that sparked conversations on belonging and resilience.

The response from the community was overwhelmingly positive, with a strong desire to participate in future screenings and workshops. Through Coast-to-Coast, we are building a foundation for ongoing storytelling, enabling Indigenous and Afro-Colombian voices to shape the narratives that define them.

**STORIES**  
*are Power*

FOR 25 YEARS, WE HAVE HELPED TELL  
THE STORIES THAT MATTER MOST.

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE CAN  
CONTINUE TO AMPLIFY THESE VOICES  
FOR ANOTHER GENERATION.



FILMAID.ORG



SCAN HERE



Stories are power.